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ROMA SOTTERRANEA
OR
AN ACCOUNT OF THE ROMAN CATACOMBS
ESPECIALLY OF THE
CEMETERY OF ST. CALLIXTUS

COMPILED FROM THE WORKS OF COMMENDATORE DE ROSSI WITH THE
CONSENT OF THE AUTHOR

New Edition, Rewritten and Greatly Enlarged

BY
REV. J. SPENCER NORTHCOTE, D.D.
CANON OF BIRMINGHAM
AND
REV. W. R. BROWNLOW, M.A.
CANON OF PLYMOUTH

" Vix fama nota est, abditis
Quam plena sanctis Roma sit,
Quam dives urbanum solum
Sacris sepulchris floreat "
—PRUDENTIUS

PART SECOND: CHRISTIAN ART

LONDON
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1879

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PREFACE.

THE task which we have undertaken is now accomplished. We have placed within the reach of English readers as complete an account of the Roman Catacombs and their contents, more especially of the Catacomb of St. Callixtus, as we have been able to collect from the works of Comendatore De Rossi. The present Part treats of ancient Christian art, on which it gives far more abundant information than has ever before appeared in the English language. This subject occupied only 130 pages, and was illustrated by 25 engravings, in our first edition. In the present edition it fills 360 pages, and receives more than 120 illustrations. The additional matter is, in the main, a mere record of facts. Future authors may combine, compare, and generalise these facts afresh, but it was first necessary that they should be collected. And we have spared no pains to make our collection as complete as possible, and to give our readers as fair an idea as we can of the originals.

Exception has been taken to some of the illustrations in our first edition, which yet will be found repeated in the present volume. We owe it therefore to ourselves and to our readers to explain that our chromo-lithographs have been executed in Rome under the superintendence of De Rossi himself, and that both these and most of the woodcuts are mere reproductions, on a smaller scale, of some of the most valuable illustrations of his own magnificent

volumes. We cannot do better, therefore, than quote his account of the principles by which he has been guided. "Great care has been taken," he says,¹ "to reproduce faithfully the style and character of the ancient paintings, and we have followed the method that is most approved in archæological publications of this kind. The pictures are represented just as they appear to a man who examines them attentively after having revived the colours by means of a little moisture. But we have avoided giving unnecessary annoyance to the eye of the spectator, and destroying the character of the painting, by marking in dark tints all the holes or other accidental disfigurements which have happened to the fresco in the course of so many centuries. The only result of this would be that the painting would come out a mass of black spots, smothered, as it were, in a tempest of darkness. On the other hand, nothing has been supplied; the plaster is represented as damaged, only I have indicated the spots very lightly, in order that this external and accidental damage might not alter the original features of these venerable paintings; and the colours which are here and there lost are represented as they appear to-day in the originals."

Some few of our illustrations are taken from Bosio and Aringhi, and the still unfinished work of P. Garrucci upon the History of Christian art. We cannot speak so confidently of the trustworthiness of these, considered as copies of the original paintings; but they may be trusted for the purpose for which they are used in the text.

May 1879.

¹ *Imagines selectæ Deiparæ Virginis in cœmeteriis suburbanis udo depictæ. Romæ, 1863. Præfat.*

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PART II.



EARLY CHRISTIAN ART.

VOL. II.

A



BOOK I.

PRELIMINARY DISSERTATIONS.

CHAPTER I.

THE ANTIQUITY OF EARLY CHRISTIAN ART.

Opinions of Catholic Theologians of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on the antiquity of Christian Art, corrected by modern discoveries—Opinions of D'Agincourt, Raoul Rochette, and others—De Rossi's judgment, founded on the chronology of the Catacombs, confirmed by independent opinions of competent art-critics, e.g., Müller and Kügler.

THE subject of early Christian Art has been unhappily the battlefield of such religious disputes, that it is hard to gain an impartial hearing for any history that may be given of the ancient decorations of the Roman Catacombs. And this difficulty has increased rather than diminished in the last quarter of a century, because many of the paintings that have been discovered during that period have been assigned by competent judges to a very high antiquity, while some of them seem to require for their complete interpretation an acceptance of certain definite Christian dogmas. It is necessary therefore for all writers, whether Catholic or Protestant, to keep strict watch over themselves in handling this topic, lest their religious prejudices should unconsciously warp their judgment.

The antiquity of Christian Art, a subject mixed up with religious controversy,

*

yet unnecessarily so, as Art is an accessory of devotion, and therefore subject to change.

In justice, however, to Catholic writers, it ought to be remembered that they are under no temptation to exaggerate the testimony of antiquity in favour of their own practice, since the use of religious pictures and images belongs to the class of things which are in themselves indifferent. They are in no way essential, and do not touch the substance of religion. They are therefore the subject of positive law, and questions concerning them may be settled, sometimes in this way, sometimes in that, according to the judgment of the ecclesiastical rulers upon special circumstances of time and place.

Pictures in Churches forbidden in Spain, A.D. 303,

Thus the famous 36th canon of the Council of Elvira, which forbade "pictures to be placed in a church, or that which is worshipped and adored to be painted on the walls," even though it could be shown that it ought to be interpreted in the strictest and most comprehensive sense possible, yet presents no difficulty to the Catholic theologian. It was a decree passed in Spain, *i.e.*, in a country where the Christian churches and cemeteries were above ground, and in the beginning of the fourth century, A.D. 303, *i.e.*, during the persecution of Diocletian, before which time the heathen soldiers had already penetrated the most hidden sanctuaries of the faithful, even in the depths of the earth, in subterranean Rome. It is not to be wondered at, then, that under such circumstances it should have been deemed necessary to take the utmost precautions to preserve the sacred mysteries of the faith, even though hidden under the veil of symbolical forms, from being exposed to public gaze, lest they should be turned into ridicule, after the fashion of the blasphemous caricature of the crucifixion, lately found on the walls of Cæsar's palace.¹ Even at the present moment there are analogous prohibitions in some parts of the Church. In certain districts of China, for example, the ecclesiastical authorities either absolutely forbid, or barely tolerate the use of images, in order that they may not put an occasion of stumbling in the way of weak brethren. It is thus

and in China now.

¹ See Note A in Appendix.

that the spirit of religious prudence and charity always inspires the legislation of the Church with reference to the accessories of devotion ; she encourages or forbids them according to the divers necessities of times, and places, and persons.

There would have been nothing strange, therefore, or inconsistent with the unchangeableness of Catholic doctrine, if no painting or sculpture had ever been used in Christian churches and cemeteries during the first three or four hundred years of the Christian era. A sufficient reason for their absence would have been supplied, by the fact that art was at that time degraded as the slave of luxury or superstition, by the prevalence of idolatry throughout the world, and also by the cruel vexations and straitened circumstances in which Christians then lived. Accordingly, when the Reformers of the sixteenth century made this one of the points of their attack, and accused the Church of violating an express article of the Decalogue, Catholic theologians limited themselves in their replies to a plea for Christian liberty, and a denial that the Church was bound in the same way as the Synagogue by the letter of the Mosaic law. They did not pretend that they were able to show an absolute conformity of practice between primitive antiquity and their own times. On the contrary, some went so far as to affirm that religious pictures and statues were quite unknown during a considerable period of the earliest history of the Church ; others, even so late as the middle of the last century, conceded that such things hardly existed during the first three centuries ; and the utmost for which any writer of credit will be found to have contended is that their use was "rare."¹

Charges of the Protestant Reformers, how answered by Catholic theologians formerly,

If Catholic theologians at the present day make other and bolder statements, this is not from any change of principle or desire to take up a new controversial position, but simply that they may be in harmony with the latest discoveries and the and in more recent times.

¹ See the authorities quoted by le Cte. Desbassayns De Richemont, *Les Nouvelles Études sur les Catacombes*, p. 273.

decisions of competent artistic authority. Bosio had seen and described innumerable paintings in the Catacombs; but we do not remember that he makes any attempt to fix their precise dates. He was content to publish the monuments he had discovered, even though they were written in a dead language, the very alphabet of which (so to speak) was then unknown. Later writers sometimes ventured to speculate on the chronology of the subject, and timidly hazarded conjectures with reference to this or that particular monument. But it has been reserved to the indefatigable perseverance of modern science to bring together from all parts the evidence necessary for an exhaustive inquiry, and then by a diligent use of its favourite and most effective instrument, comparison, to arrange in chronological order, and so to prepare the way for correct appreciation.

Opinions of
D'Agincourt,

Seroux d'Agincourt, seeking to write a history of art, was one of the first to institute a careful comparison between the later Pagan and the earliest Christian paintings; and he set down some of those which he had seen in the Catacombs to the second century, others to the third.¹ This was about fifty years ago. Twenty years later Raoul Rochette went much further, and maintained that it could no longer be a subject of debate whether the primitive Church authorised the execution of religious paintings; for that the question was irrevocably solved in the affirmative—"for the Christian, by the authority of the Church; and for the antiquarian, by the study of monuments." "On our first entrance into the Roman Catacombs," he says, "we seem to be still on the soil of antiquity; the memorials of the first Christians offer us a tradition, or at least an echo of it."² Within the last few years, however, the standard of knowledge respecting ancient art and its history has been much advanced; many more specimens, both Pagan and Christian, have been brought to light, and it has been

Raoul
Rochette.

¹ *Histoire de l'Art*, tom. ii. p. 20; tom. iii. p. 4; tom. vi. plate vi.

² *Tableau des Catacombes Romaines*, pp. 162, 176; ed. Bruxelles, 1837.

possible for many more critics of all nations to examine them, either the originals themselves, or accurate reproductions of them by photography. We have no intention of quoting the opinions of those critics at length, or passing any judgment about them; for a reason, which will appear presently, they do not concern us much. We will content ourselves with saying generally, that all are agreed in claiming very high antiquity indeed for some of the existing specimens of Christian painting; and that this verdict is so universally accepted, that a grave and competent writer declares that "it would be a work of supererogation and an anachronism to set to work to justify it. No serious person, having any pretensions to scientific knowledge, would dream of calling it in question."¹

Unfortunately, a writer on Roman archæology in our own country has advocated the contrary thesis, and has even ventured to use the name of De Rossi in support of his opinion. As it is the very purpose and profession of these volumes to put the fruit of De Rossi's learning and industry within the reach of English readers, we are reluctantly obliged to take notice of these misstatements; but our notice shall be as brief as the importance of the subject will permit. Mr. Parker, in his volumes on the Roman Tombs and on the Catacombs, writes as follows:—"Fully three-fourths of the paintings in the Catacombs belong to the latest restorations of the eighth and ninth centuries; and of the remaining fourth part, a considerable number are of the sixth century. . . . There are many paintings of the fourth and fifth centuries, of which the earliest are the 'Good Shepherd,' and certain well-known Scriptural subjects. . . . There are also paintings of the second and third centuries, but these are not of religious subjects at all, and might as well be the decoration of a Pagan tomb as of a Christian Catacomb."² Possibly, some of the very numerous 'Good Shepherds' may be before the time of Constantine, but the paintings of the second and third centuries are not

Mr. Parker's
misrepresenta-
tions of De
Rossi.

¹ Richemont, *ubi supra*.

² The Catacombs, p. xi.

Christian nor Scriptural.”¹ And he adds, that “though De Rossi is careful never to assert that the fresco paintings in the Catacombs belong to the age of the martyrdoms, yet the popular belief is so completely implied in his great work throughout, that the abridgers of it, both English and French, have asserted it without hesitation.”

In reviewing Mr. Parker's work in the pages of a Catholic periodical,² we quoted, as a sufficient refutation, the Indexes to De Rossi's *Bullettino di Archæologia Cristiana*, which Indexes were drawn up by De Rossi himself, and contain such headings as the following: “Christian pictures of the first century, of the second, of the third, the fourth,” and so on down to the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, in a recent number of the *Archæological Journal*,³ Mr. Parker has been allowed to repeat his former assertions even more strongly than before, and to declare that “De Rossi knows perfectly well that three-fourths of the paintings are of the eighth and ninth centuries.”

Opinion of De
Rossi,

To this extraordinary misstatement we are authorised by De Rossi to give the most unqualified contradiction. He says that it can only be accounted for by supposing that Mr. Parker has confounded in his own mind two classes of paintings that are entirely distinct, and has then reversed their relative proportions. “I have thoroughly explained,” he writes,⁴ “in my *Roma Sotterranea*, what paintings in the historical crypts (which underwent new changes even down to the eighth and ninth centuries) were—not restored, but—executed *de integro* at that time; and their style enables us immediately to distinguish them from those of more ancient ages, and of classical art. Some paintings were contemporaneous with the sepulchres which they adorn; others were made, and often cancelled, and others substituted for them at successive periods, but only in those crypts which we call historical,

¹ The Catacombs, p. 15.

² *The Month*—March 1878.

³ Vol. xxxiv., pp. 431–442.

⁴ In a letter to the present writer, dated 28th November 1878.

which were frequented and cared for till the time when the subterranean sanctuaries were abandoned, in consequence of the translation of the relics of all the more celebrated martyrs."

It ought not to have been necessary to make this explanation afresh; for in truth De Rossi has spoken plainly enough from the very first, and in all his published works, so that we are at a loss to understand how a contrary impression can ever have been created. He does not hesitate to name the first century, or the very beginning of the second, as the true date of some paintings in the crypts of Lucina, in the cemetery of Domitilla, and of others elsewhere; others again, he attributes to the middle and end of the second century, or beginning of the third; and he sets aside the objections of Protestants as fully and finally disposed of by the facts of the case.

"It may be asked," he says, "whether it is credible that the faithful, in the age of the Apostles or of their disciples, when the Church, fresh from the bosom of the image-hating Synagogue, was in deadly conflict with idolatry, should have so promptly and so generally adopted and (so to speak) baptized the fine arts?" And he answers that so grave a question deserves to be discussed in a special treatise; but that, for the present, he "will only say that the universality of the pictures in the subterranean cemeteries, and the richness, the variety, the freedom of the more ancient types, when contrasted with the cycle of pictures which I clearly see becoming more restricted and impoverished towards the end of the third century,—who attributes some paintings to the very earliest ages. *R.S., i. 99, 196.* these things prove the impossibility of accepting the hypothesis of those who affirm the use of pictures to have been introduced, little by little, on the sly, as it were, and in opposition to the practice of the primitive Church." And again, "The flourishing condition of the fine arts in the days of the Flavii, of Trajan, of Hadrian, and of the Antonines, and the great number of their professors in the metropolis of the empire, the conversion to Christianity of powerful personages,

and even of members of imperial families, such as Domitilla and Flavius Clemens, certainly very much favoured the introduction and development of Christian pictorial art. And, on the contrary, the decline of those same fine arts in the third and fourth centuries; the increasing cost of the handiwork of the painter and the sculptor, as their numbers diminished every day; the gradual but continuous impoverishment of public and private fortunes, which induced even the senate and the emperors to make their new monuments at the expense of others more ancient, all this could not much facilitate the multiplication of new works of Christian art during that period; so that, even if the faithful gained in proselytes, in power, and in liberty, they lost quite as much, if I may say so, in the conditions required for the flourishing of Christian art."

He then goes on to inquire whether it is really true that Christian artists had more liberty in the third century than in the first, and he says he sees every reason to believe the contrary. Not only do the artistic and the economic history of those times prepare us to expect this, but (as he proceeds to point out) the interference of the Pagan government with the privacy and undisturbed possession of the Catacombs would also have exercised a powerful influence in the same direction. If it did not altogether check the employment of artists for the work of decoration, yet it could hardly fail to impose restrictions in the way in which their art should be exercised; and he concludes, that if the use of painting was allowed to the Christians in the third century, *a fortiori* it was in the first and second.

The same
allowed now
even by
Protestant
authors, *e.g.*,
Rev. St. John
Tyrwhitt,

Several Protestant writers have of late years been led to embrace the same conclusion, but by other reasons. Mr. St. John Tyrwhitt, for example, thinks it probable that the Church of the first three centuries was not disturbed by any controversy as to the use of pictorial or other representative ornament in her places of assembly; that though the Hebrew and the Greek element in the Church may have differed somewhat in this

matter, yet that symbolic ornament at least was used in the earliest Catacombs. He considers that as Christians of the first ages met where they could, and as most halls or large rooms in the towns of Greece or Rome were in those days more or less ornamented by painting or carving, Christian congregations were early accustomed to the graceful but unmeaning grotesques and flower-ornaments, or even to pictures with subjects of everyday character, on the walls within which they assembled; that by and by they attached to some of these pictures a Christian meaning, and so the step was made from merely tolerating heathen ornament to utilising it; and that this was probably the origin of Christian art-symbolism; and that the first public sign of alarm, or rather of precaution, was given in that canon of the Spanish Council which has been already quoted.¹ Mr. Burgon is probably more exact, when and the Dean of Chichester. he says that the early Christians decorated the walls of the Catacombs, because it was the universal fashion at that time thus to ornament the sepulchres of the dead.²

It would not be difficult to collect similar testimony from Grounds of De Rossi's judgment. the pages of other authors; but there would be no use in doing so, because De Rossi's judgment, of which alone we have undertaken to be the exponents, proceeds on a totally different basis. It is not founded on any view of Christian theology, nor on any arbitrary theory as to the probable origin and development of Christian art in general, not even on an examination of an indefinite number of examples considered individually, but on a very wide and careful induction, the result of his own and his brother's scientific determination of the chronology of every part of the Catacombs. His plan here, as well as in every other branch of his subject, has been simply to note all he sees, and the precise situation in which he sees it. He rightly judged that this method, so accurate,

¹ Art Teaching of the Primitive Church, pp. 37, 38, 67.

² Letters from Rome, p. 250. See also the New History of Painting, by Crowe and Cavalcaselle, vol. i. p. 1.

so positive and scientific, if conscientiously pursued for many years and in several different cemeteries, must needs supply what had hitherto been the great deficiency in the science of sacred archæology, viz., some reliable information as to the chronology of each particular cemetery, and even of the successive developments of each cemetery, as well as of the monuments found in them. His anticipations have been abundantly justified by the results.

Bullettino, 1872,
64.

His judgment
accepted by
Mommsen.

“De Rossi has succeeded,” says the learned Mommsen, “in fixing the limits of the different great epochs in the history of the Catacombs, and in establishing in a most decisive manner certain important facts. He has also been able to assign chronological limits to the progress and development of various details, such as the monogram of the name of Christ, various monumental *formulae*,” &c. And in another place the same high authority observes, with reference to the Cemetery of Callixtus in particular, that “the successive execution of individual parts of the whole plan may now be traced in periods of ten to ten years; and by this means it has become possible to obtain a chronological precision not only with regard to epigraphy, but also to painting and many other branches of archæology, such as it would be impossible to arrive at in any other field of archæological research. And though some of De Rossi’s assertions cannot fail to call forth some opposition, there can be no doubt that he has in a general way laid down fundamental principles and rules which will prove a lasting acquisition to science.”¹

Mommsen then proceeds to criticise an assertion which he considers questionable, and against which he urges many and grave arguments. It concerns a question of the supplement that should be made to complete an imperfect inscription; and De Rossi himself would be among the first to acknowledge the possibility of error in details of this kind, and to listen with candour to any emendations that might be proposed. But

¹ In Neuen Reich., 1871. Chronik der Winckelmannsfeste, p. 184.

with regard to the fundamental rules and principles of his system, they have never been seriously assailed, and every new discovery only gives them fresh confirmation.

Now, even in the physical sciences, which enjoy *par excellence* the name of being exact, when a man has observed a certain number of phenomena which he can group together, he tries to conceive some hypothesis whereby to explain them all. Then he waits patiently, collecting more facts and continuing his observations; and if all the new phenomena which he observes fit into his hypothesis, he rightly considers that its truth is demonstrated. And "in archæological studies," to quote the language of De Rossi himself, "there is no greater delight than that which arises from a succession of new discoveries, which demonstrate as certain that which before seemed probable, as true that which was before only an hypothesis or a conjecture. Even if these new discoveries are in themselves unimportant, they are nevertheless of the greatest use, as well as a source of intense pleasure to the student. For whereas they have been preceded and accompanied by many investigations, and by a continual process of reasoning about the discoveries already made and those which are expected, hereby the soundness and value of this reasoning, and the exactness of these investigations, is put on its trial and brought to the test of facts. If it happens that the new monuments which come to light are in harmony with the arguments that had been used and the conjectures that had been hazarded, their truth receives decisive confirmation; whereas, contrariwise, if there comes to light something altogether different from what was expected, the falsehood of the arguments is demonstrated."

and confirmed
by each fresh
discovery.

Bullettino, 1863,
73.

It was necessary to enter into these particulars with reference to De Rossi's chronological appreciation of the paintings in the Catacombs, both to dissipate the erroneous accounts of it which have been put in circulation, and in order that our readers might have a clear idea of the basis on which it rests.

That basis is never the mere judgment of art critics as to the choice of subject or the style of execution, though this may be sometimes appealed to by way of corroboration ; but it is the ascertained date of the excavation itself on which the decorations are found.

Most paintings in the Catacombs contemporary with their excavation,

It has been already mentioned with reference to the historical crypts, that these continued to receive new decorations as long as the bodies of the martyrs remaining there attracted the devout visits of the people. The dates, therefore, of any painting in these crypts must be determined by other criteria. But the ordinary vaults or chambers (which are of course far more numerous) were ornamented with painting when they were made, according to the general practice of the period ; and until proof is brought to the contrary, we have no right to assume that the painting was ever renewed. Experience teaches us that nothing is more apt to be neglected than the sepulchral monuments of private individuals. After the lapse of a certain time, when the immediate descendants of the deceased have passed away, it is not uncommon to see them sacrificed altogether, if need be, to satisfy new necessities, or even new whims and caprices. And, just so, we find painting after painting in every part of the Catacombs—in some parts, *e.g.*, in the Cemetery of St. Soteris, every painting without exception—pierced through and spoilt in order to make room for more recent graves. This does not look as though there had been any care taken to preserve them, or any system of renewing them when they fell into decay.

R.S., iii. 62.

and never renewed.

Some recent writers indeed profess to be able to detect in these paintings, both in the originals and in photographs of them, evidence of various re-touchings. De Rossi, who knows them best, entirely dissents from this opinion ; and we have never heard it maintained by anybody who has an intimate acquaintance with them. It is quite certain that no such thing is known to have happened in modern times, and there is no record of its having been done in the days of St. Paulinus of

Nola, to which (we learn from Mr. Tyrwhitt) Mr. Parker is inclined to attribute it. Moreover, if that gentleman may be taken as a fair representative of the advocates of this opinion, it would seem that it is not pretended that there was ever any renewal or change of the whole subject; "the original subjects were faithfully repeated;" only "stronger and less correct markings were painted over fainter and better forms."¹ In a merely artistic point of view, this question becomes of course a matter of some importance; but it certainly is not necessary that it should be discussed here. For in our present volume we are more concerned with the matter than with the manner of the decorations of the Catacombs; and if this is secured to us, we are comparatively indifferent whether we see precisely the same artistic outlines as were seen in the days of the martyrs, or as they were renewed in the days of Paulinus.

At the same time, we have done our best in our illustrations—as we have explained in our Preface—to enable our readers to judge of them also from the artist's point of view, though in this we cannot hope to have given satisfaction to all our readers. Kügler laments that the engravings taken of them in former days give no adequate conception of their style. Everybody condemns the careful drawing and brilliant colouring of the illustrations in the magnificent folios of M. Perret, published by the Imperial Government of France in 1852–1856. Mr. Parker complains of our own, as "pretty pictures of modern artists," presenting a strong contrast with the originals; whilst we in our turn consider that his photographs give no idea whatever of the real frescoes of the Catacombs. Photography, admirable for sculpture and engraving, never adequately represents painting. The light blues and yellows disappear, while the reds and greens come out black. Let any one compare the painting of SS. Cornelius and Cyprian,² near the tomb of the former in the crypt of Lucina, with Mr.

Faithfulness
of our illustrations.

Mr. Parker's
photographs.

¹ The Art Teaching of the Primitive Church, pp. 118, 123, 225.

² See Plate XL in Part I.

Parker's photograph (No. 1813), and he cannot fail to acknowledge that the photograph is a grotesque caricature rather than a faithful representation of the original. As to our own illustrations, we are well aware that they cannot claim to be considered facsimiles of the paintings which they are intended to represent. In some of them, perhaps, we could have wished to see coarser lines and ruder strokes, but we do not think it possible for any engraving really to convey the exact archaic aspect of the originals; and we have stated in our Preface the reasons which have led us not to attempt to reproduce the faded colours and broken surfaces precisely in their present condition.

Artistic merit
of the decorations
of the
Catacombs.

Until the more recent discoveries, it was the fashion to speak in the most disparaging and even contemptuous terms of all specimens of pictorial art in the Catacombs as "poor productions, in which the meagreness of invention is only equalled by the feebleness of execution."¹ Now, however, a higher and truer estimate of their artistic merits prevails. We will not quote the language of De Rossi or any devoted student of the Catacombs upon this point, but only adduce the testimony of independent critics and historians of art. One of these,² while complaining of "much pettiness and trifling in some of the decorations," which he attributes to "the frequently enjoined effort to avoid everything savouring of idolatry, even in objects so minute as signet-rings," yet acknowledges that "certain emblems are happily conceived even on the score of art, such as the lamb and the thirsting hart, and the dove with the olive branch." And another says,³ that "as regards the distribution of the spaces and mode of decoration, they approach very near to the wall-paintings of the best period of the empire; the light arabesques remind us of the paintings at Pompeii and the Baths of Titus; they are characterised by a peculiar solemnity and dignity of style, though accompanied by certain technical deficiencies."

¹ Lord Lindsay's *Sketches of the History of Christian Art*, i. 39.

² Müller's *Ancient Art and its Remains*, p. 200.

³ Kugler's *Handbook of Painting*, p. 14, ed. Eastlake, 1851.

CHAPTER II.

THE RELATIONS OF CHRISTIAN AND PAGAN ART.

General points of resemblance between ancient Christian and contemporary Pagan art—Theory of their relations according to Raoul Rochette, founded on imperfect knowledge; examined in detail—The Good Shepherd—Orpheus—Psyche—Personifications of the seasons, rivers, and other natural objects—Relations of Christian and Pagan art according to De Rossi.

THE quotation with which we concluded our last chapter suggests a very important and necessary subject for our consideration—the relations between the art exhibited in the Catacombs and contemporary Pagan art. Such relations were, from the very nature of the case, inevitable; since, as has been truly remarked by Raoul Rochette, “It was no more in the power of the early Christians to invent a new imitative language in painting than it was to produce at once a new idiom of Greek or Latin.” Antecedently, therefore, to examination, we should naturally expect to find many points of resemblance between the works of Pagan and Christian artists, and we shall soon see that these anticipations are abundantly fulfilled.

It was said by Niebuhr that ancient art had closed before Christianity began; but there is a certain degree of exaggeration in this statement. The expressions of Pliny, who belongs to the very time with which we are concerned, are probably more accurate, when he complains that art was in a state of decline, and in danger of perishing, because it was degraded to a mere means of ornamentation. Instead of executing large

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B

Necessary relations between Christian and Pagan art.

Condition of Pagan art at the end of the first century,

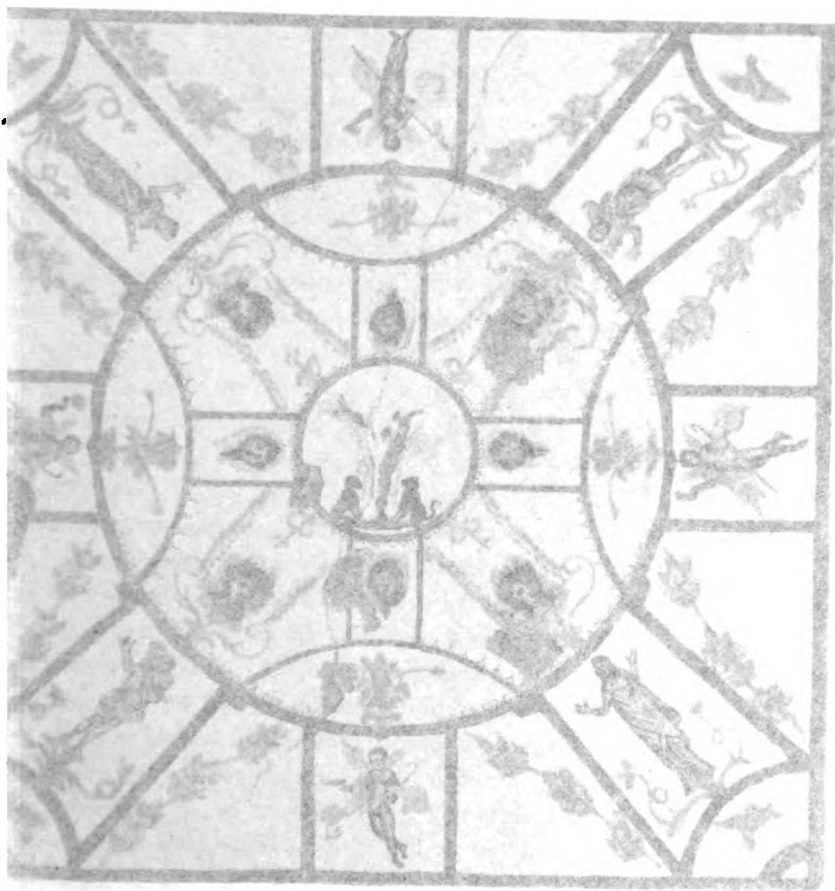
and important works, worthy of being exposed to view in public halls or temples, it was chiefly confined to the decoration of apartments. A visit to Pompeii, or the study of books in which the antiquities of that city have been illustrated, sufficiently explains to us the style of decoration that was in fashion. It sets before us a variety of architectural or geometrical divisions of space marked out upon the walls, and occupied by a few isolated figures of mythological story, of genii, or of fantastic animals, small landscapes, graceful wreaths of foliage and flowers, or baskets of fruit, little birds, and other similar trifles. But "even in its degenerate state," says one of the German critics whom we have already quoted, "the art exhibits inexhaustible invention and productiveness. The spaces on the walls are divided and disposed in the most tasteful manner; arabesques of admirable richness of fancy; the roofs in form of arbours, hung with garlands, interspersed with fluttering winged forms; landscapes, for the most part but slightly indicated; all this in lively colours, clearly and agreeably arranged, and executed with much feeling for harmony of colour and an architectonic general effect."¹

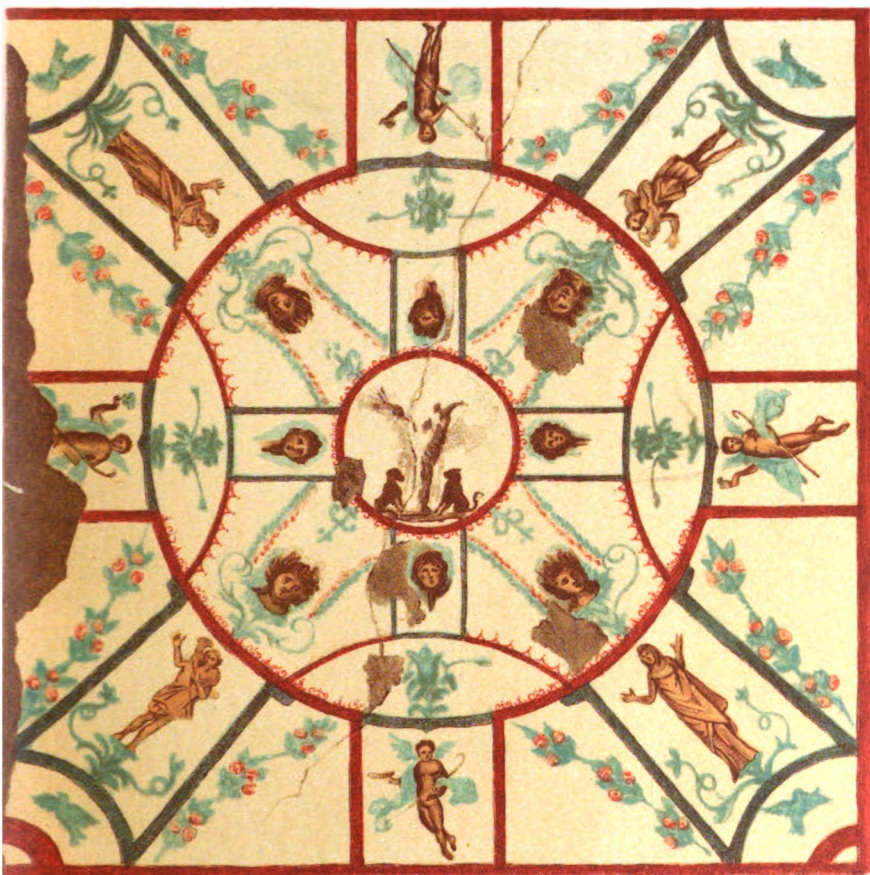
compared
with what
is to be seen
in the Cata-
combs.

And this is precisely what Kügler refers to when he says "that the paintings in the Catacombs remind us of the paintings at Pompeii and the Baths of Titus." Hence an English Protestant author does not hesitate to say that, on entering some of the most ancient chambers in the Catacombs, "you are not certain for a few moments whether you are looking on a Pagan or a Christian work;"² that is, of course, if we confine our attention to the general effect of the paintings, apart from their surroundings. There is the same geometrical division of the roof, the same general arrangements of the subjects, "the same fabulous animals, the same graceful curves, the same foliage, fruit and flowers, and birds, in both;" presently you detect a figure of the Good Shepherd occupying the central

¹ Müller's *Ancient Art and its Remains*, p. 176.

² Burgon's *Letters from Rome*, p. 250.





compartment of the composition, or the figure of a woman in prayer, or of Daniel in the lions' den, or some other well-known Christian symbol, and you are at once satisfied as to the religion of the art you are studying.

The accompanying sketch of the ceiling of a chamber in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus is sufficient to establish the general truth of these remarks; and in the chromo-lithograph of

R.S., ii.
tav. xvii. i.

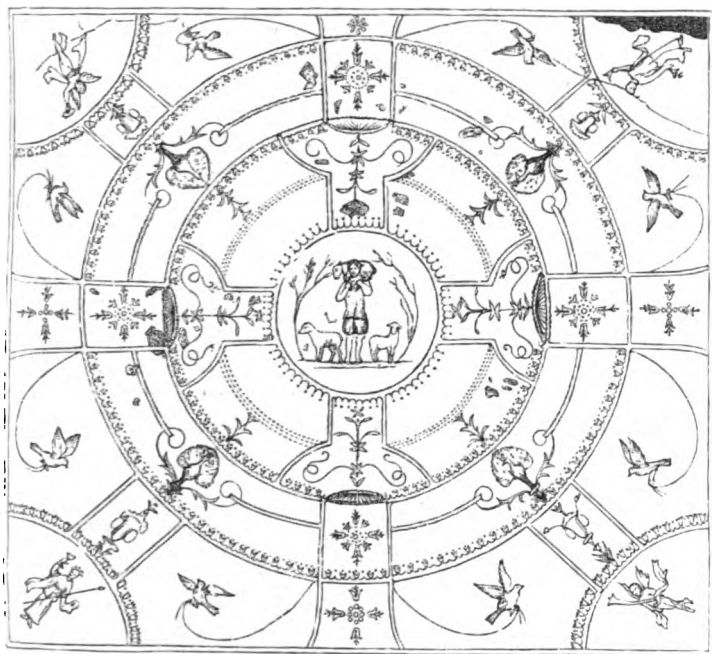


FIG. 1.—Ceiling of Chamber A₃ in our Plan of St. Callixtus.

Plate XII. the reader will see a still better specimen taken from the same Catacomb. The vases or festoons of flowers, the fluttering birds attached by light strings to part of the framework of the picture, the ornamental heads, the peacocks with spread tails, the naked genii with slight drapery floating around them, or the clothed figures bearing fruits, or flowers, or a horn of plenty, or the sacrificial *putera*, and intended perhaps to personify the seasons—these all are a literal repro-

duction of what is to be seen in scores of Pagan dwelling-houses and tombs. Yet Daniel between two lions in the centre of one vault, and the Good Shepherd between two sheep in the centre of the other, suffice to establish the Christian character of both these works.

Modifications
in art by
Christianity
inevitable.

The Christian authorship of the scene represented in the chromo-lithograph might have been suspected, perhaps, on account of the figures in the four corners, which are treated somewhat 'differently from their Pagan prototypes; but of these we shall have occasion to speak hereafter. At present it is necessary that we should insist on another most important consideration, viz, that these remarks upon the similarity of Christian to Pagan art are often pushed far beyond their just limits. We have already quoted the observation that it was as impossible for the early Christians to invent a new language in painting as in speaking. And no doubt this is quite true; but just as new ideas require new words to express them,—and in this way Christianity has made most important changes in the language of every country where it has gained a footing,—so they require new forms in art, or at least modifications of old forms; and these would naturally go on increasing day by day until at length a whole cycle of Christian subjects would be created, departing more and more widely from those which were familiar to the heathen, and finally, perhaps, excluding them altogether.

This seems to be the natural and even necessary order of things; and it at once illustrates and explains an observation which has been sometimes made, as though it were something strange, that we do not recognise in the history of Christian art the first efforts of imitation common to the nations of antiquity,—beginning in rude and formless essays, the result of indistinct notions, and advancing step by step towards excellence; but rather, on the contrary, find the earliest specimens of the art to be the best, if not in conception, yet certainly in execution. But this observation overlooks the fact

that the Christians were not a new and distinct nation, either geographically or politically. They were indeed "a holy nation, a purchased people,"¹ knit together by the closest bonds of a supernatural charity, but they were made up of persons gathered out "of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues;"² and they did not refuse to avail themselves of anything that was good, useful, or beautiful, among the gifts or occupations of those amongst whom they lived. Whereas, then, "the creatures of God had heretofore"—(by painting as well as by other means)—"been turned to an abomination to the souls of men, and a snare to the feet of the unwise,"³ He, who had now become visible, expressly that "through Him we might be led to the love of things invisible,"⁴ did not forbid His Church to avail herself of the pictorial art as a means of rendering spiritual things sensible, and thereby moving and instructing the minds of men. She therefore might freely borrow from Pagan art all that was suitable to her purpose; and it is a mere question of fact, and not of principle, how much she really did borrow.

The French writer whom we have quoted was of opinion that there had been a direct positive imitation by Christian artists of Pagan models, and that this imitation could be clearly seen, not only in the general distribution of the whole, but also in all the details of each composition. "The Christian artists," he says, "seem so dependent on heathen art that they were obliged to borrow from it the models even for their Biblical subjects; and where such could not be found, and the artists were forced to stand on their own feet, their execution is in the highest degree defective, and may be rather called a simple indication than an artistic representation of the subjects intended." He suggests, therefore, that they were guided in their selection of subjects by the fact that, of one there were Pagan models that might be copied, of another there were none.

Christian art, according to Raoul Rochette, a direct imitation of Pagan.

The peculi-

¹ 1 Peter ii. 9.² Apoc. vii. 9.³ Wisdom xiv. 11.⁴ Præf. Miss. in Nat. Dom.

arities of costume, and all the minor accessories of the painting were, according to him, determined by the same cause.

Nay, further still, he maintained that the Christian artists were so servile in their imitation of these Pagan models, that it even led them astray from the teaching of their Divine Master, and caused them to introduce false and unseemly details into their representations of the most solemn subjects. Thus, they dared to paint a goat receiving the caresses of the Good Shepherd ; and as this animal had no place in the sacred parable, but, on the contrary, was (in another parable) identified with the wicked, its presence here was to be accounted for on the supposition that the artist was imitating, consciously or unconsciously, some Pagan composition. Again, they often put into the hands of the same figure the shepherd's reed or pipe ; and this, too, could only be the effect of some reminiscence, at least, either of the statue of Pan, or of some Pagan shepherd.

This theory founded on the alleged existence of Pagan paintings in the Catacombs.

The ability and pertinacity with which this author insisted upon his theory once obtained for it a certain measure of acceptance. Nevertheless, the principal arguments by which it was supposed to be confirmed being now destroyed, it has of late years fallen rapidly into disrepute among Christian writers, though it is, of course, upheld, and even in a yet more exaggerated form, by those writers who deny the Divine origin of Christianity, and seek to confound its chief characteristics with those of some of the Oriental forms of worship or systems of philosophy.

But this now known to be an error.

Raoul Rochette had been misled in part by certain paintings of a semi-Pagan character, published by Bottari, and by him attributed to a Christian Catacomb. But a more careful examination of the locality has shown that the cemetery in which these were found was really no part of the Catacomb with which it is now accidentally connected, but quite distinct, belonging to the followers of the mysteries of Mithras, so that we need no longer be surprised at the mixture of Paganism

and Christianity which they exhibit; e.g., Pluto and Proserpine, under the names of Dispaten and Abracura; the Divine Fates, and Mercury as the messenger of the gods, carrying off the soul of the deceased in a chariot drawn by four horses, and descending with it into some abyss in the middle of the earth.¹

In like manner, another painting, also published by Bottari, in which the principal figure is Victory, and which Raoul Rochette on his authority supposed to be Christian, belongs to a subterranean chamber which was really Pagan. In the genuine paintings of the Catacombs, nothing of this kind has ever been found.

Let us now proceed, however, to describe what has been found there, and which has been supposed to lend support to the theory we are combating.

The Good Shepherd was undoubtedly one of the earliest and most frequent subjects of representation among the early Christians. It is the very type and sample of the peaceful character of Christian art during its first period; and it is to be seen on every species of Christian monument that has come down to us.

The Good Shepherd, why so frequently repeated.

Of course, amid such a multitude of examples there is considerable variety of treatment. We cannot, however, appreciate the suggestion of Kùgler, that this frequent repetition of the subject is probably to be attributed to the capabilities which it possessed in an artistic point of view. Rather, it was selected because it expressed the whole sum and substance of the Christian dispensation. In the language even of the Old Testament, the action of Divine Providence upon the world is frequently expressed by images and allegories borrowed from pastoral life; God is the Shepherd, and men are His sheep.² But in a still more special way is this figure used to denote God's care and rule over His own chosen people, which was so

¹ See Note B. in Appendix.

² Ps. xciv. 7; Ezech. xviii. 13.

Varieties in
mode of re-
presentation
explained.

much more direct and immediate than that over the rest of mankind. He is said to seek and to visit them, to gather them together, to lead and to feed them, as a shepherd does his sheep; and the same tender similitude is used as prophetic of the character of the Redeemer,¹ who was to come down from His eternal throne in heaven into the wilderness of this world, to seek the lost sheep of the whole human race, and having brought them together into one fold upon earth, to transport them thence to the ever-verdant pastures of paradise. Hence it was not to be wondered at, that when He really came He vouchsafed to assume this title as His own;² and having done so, it was of course lawful for Christian artists to represent Him in every suitable position and with every fitting accessory that belonged to it. They might add the instruments of the profession, such as the crook, the milk-pail, and the flute or pipe. It has been objected that this last adjunct was derived from the heathen representations of Pan; but this is altogether a gratuitous assumption. It is far more probable that it was taken from the circumstances of real life. Indeed, we may say that it was certainly so taken; for, had it been borrowed from familiarity with the figures of Pan, it should have appeared in the earliest representations of the subject, whereas there is no certain instance of it before the middle of the third century, and it becomes more common as we advance further into the fourth. By that time, a Christian preacher, St. Gregory Nazianzen, could even call the pastoral staff of a bishop by this very name of a shepherd's pipe, ἡ ποιμηνική σύριγξ; and another early Christian writer had said, "I know that shepherds who are skilled in their art seldom use their crook or staff, but lead their sheep by the pipe."³ It was, in fact, only another way of setting forth the same truth as our Lord expressed when He said that "the sheep

¹ Esaias xl. 11; Ezech. xxxiv. *passim*.

² St. John x. 14; St. Luke xv. 4; St. Matt. xv. 24.

³ See Garrucci, *Vetri*, &c., p. 63.

follow their shepherd because they know his voice.”¹ So far, then, from the presence of the pipe in the hands of Christ being an anomaly, due to some Pagan artist or model, and so requiring explanation, it denoted an essential feature of the pastoral character, which Christian art could hardly have failed to introduce at some stage of its development, even if it had not been used from the beginning.

So, again, the substitution in some instances of a goat for a sheep receiving our Lord's caresses, may not improbably have been intended as a direct protest against the unchristian severity of the Novatians and other heretics refusing reconciliation to certain classes of penitent sinners. It was a sensible or artistic translation of our Lord's own words, that He “came not to call the just, but sinners to repentance.”

The essential idea, however, of the Christian Good Shepherd, and that which is most frequently repeated on all monuments of art in the Catacombs, is the most laborious and condescending act which belongs to the pastoral office, viz., the bringing home of the lost sheep upon His shoulders. De Rossi sees a special propriety in setting up this most loving and gracious figure among the tombs of the dead, because some prayers of the ancient Liturgies distinctly spoke of the dead as having now been carried home on the shoulders of the Good Shepherd.

The Good Shepherd bearing a sheep on his shoulders

Raoul Rochette, however, makes such a display of a Mercury carrying a ram, of Fauns, shepherds, or other young men carrying goats, sheep, or lambs, figured on monuments of Pagan, Greek, or Roman art, that he almost leaves his readers in doubt whether this beautiful figure is a certain sign of Christianity; or, at any rate, he implies that the early Christians borrowed their idea of it more from the traditions of Pagan art than from the Gospel. To this De Rossi replies, first, that this Mercury, these Fauns and Pagan shepherds, all naked as they are, have very little in common with the Good Shepherd

not copied from Pagan models.

R.S., i. 347.

¹ St. John x. 4.

of Christian monuments ; and, secondly, that it is extremely rare to find on Pagan monuments any figures of this kind. "In all the frescoes of Pagan sepulchres in Rome, I only know," he says, "of one which can with any show of reason be compared with the Good Shepherd of our cemeteries, viz., that in the so-called sepulchre of the Nasones." Spring is there represented by a maiden with a basket of flowers, and a naked dancing shepherd, having a shepherd's staff in one hand, and with the other holding together the feet of a goat lying upon his shoulders. De Rossi considers that nobody but a man enamoured of paradoxes would dream of setting this figure side by side with the grave figure of the Christian Good Shepherd standing alone, or at least pre-eminent, in the centre or other principal part of a painting. "In confirmation of this remark, I can appeal," he continues, "to a Christian painting as yet unpublished, to be seen in one of the most ancient *cubicula* of the Cemetery of Domitilla. Here is both our own Good Shepherd, and also a female dancing figure, like to that in the sepulchre of the Nasones ; but the one occupies the centre of the roof and of the vaulted arches over the altar-tombs, and the other is only one of the accessory ornaments used for the mere purpose of decoration, like the *genii* in Plate XII. I know of one Pagan sepulchre, indeed, where we may see a shepherd clothed in a tunic, with his crook in his hand and a goat upon his shoulders, which is not at all unlike the paintings in the Catacombs ; but it forms part of a long pastoral scene, and is by no means the principal figure of the whole. It is impossible to confound such a representation as this, occurring once and in the midst of a series of scenes from agricultural life, with the religious character of the Good Shepherd of the Gospel.

Description of
Pagan figures

"As to the mere artistic composition of the group, it is not denied that the Christian artist may have imitated, as far as it suited his purpose, some ancient model of classical style ;—e.g., the shepherds on the roof of one of the most ancient crypts of

Lucina (Plate XII.), represented in the act of holding in the left hand both legs of the lambs which they carry on their shoulders, are in this respect not unlike one to be seen in a picture found in Herculaneum ;¹ but here, too, the figure of the shepherd is quite naked in front, and he holds the hand of a female who is clothed. It has been conjectured that this figure at Herculaneum may have been made in imitation of the famous statue by Calamis," described by Pausanias² as though it existed in his time at Tanagra in Boeotia. He tells us that there was a temple in this town, of Hermes, under the title of Kriophoros, or ram-bearer ; and on his feast the most beautiful youth of the citizens used to go round the walls bearing a lamb on his shoulders, in memory of a tradition which stated that Hermes himself had once delivered the place from pestilence by a similar ceremony. Ancient representations of this ram-bearing Hermes are still preserved ; and one of them, said to have come from Thrace, may be seen in the Pembroke collection at Wilton House. It is sculptured in alto-rilievo on the face of a terminal block, and is about three feet high. The figure is naked in front, but with drapery hanging down the sides. The hair, bound with a diadem, is arranged in a double row of curls over the forehead, and hangs in a long tress on each side of the neck. At the ankles are wings, or rather what should have been wings ; but the later artist in copying the archaic original has misunderstood them. Through the kindness of the noble owner, we are able to set before our readers an engraving, taken from a photograph, of this statue. The youth depicted on the walls of Herculaneum is much more handsome ; but this is probably a more faithful reproduction of the statue of Calamis.³ It certainly corresponds better with the representation on the copper coins of Tanagra, a specimen of which may be seen in the British Museum.

¹ Pitt. d' Erc., tom. v. tav. 56, p. 249.

² Lib. ix. c. 22, p. 752, ed. Leipsic, 1696.

³ Calamis was a contemporary of Phidias. See Cicero Brut., 18.

contrasted
with the
Christian.

We set face to face with this Hermes-Kriophoros a copy of a statue of the Christian Good Shepherd, taken from a photograph of the original which stands near the entrance of the Christian Museum at the Lateran. It is not known where the

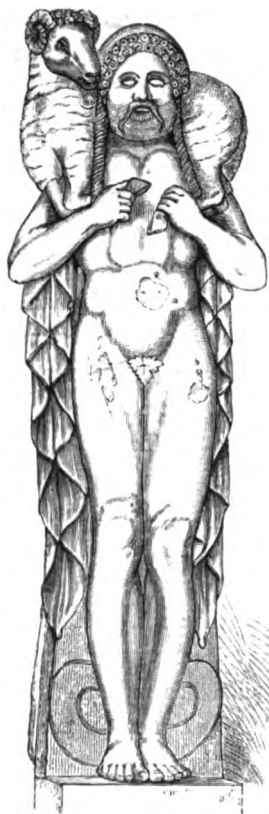


FIG. 2.—*Antique Statue of Hermes-Kriophoros from Wilton House.*

original was found, but it is certainly very ancient,¹ and all are agreed that it is Christian. It has sufficient artistic merit to suggest a suspicion that the artist may have had before him some Greek model, the best points of which he reproduced.

¹ The legs only are a modern restoration.

But if his model bore any resemblance to the statues of Hermes-Kriophoros which have come down to us, he certainly exercised great freedom in departing from it very widely.

We need not pursue the details of this subject any further ;



FIG. 3.—*Statue of Good Shepherd from Christian Museum at the Lateran.*

for the whole subject of ancient Pagan statues of gods or heroes, represented as carrying sheep on their shoulders, has been recently examined at length and with great ability by a writer in the "*Gazette Archeologique*,"¹ and his conclusions

M. Chanoî's
opinion.

¹ Conducted by Messieurs de Witte and Lenormant ; 1878, pp. 17 *et seq.*, pp. 100 *et seq.*

tally so precisely with the thesis of De Rossi, that they might almost have been written for the express purpose of supporting it. Yet we learn that he has never read De Rossi's work, and does not study Christian archæology. His conclusions are based solely on a critical examination of all the Pagan monuments of this class that are known to exist ; and they may be accepted, therefore, as an independent testimony of very great authority, representing the present verdict of science upon this subject. He sums up, then, as follows :—" These facts suffice to show that the first Christian painters, when they created the type of the Good Shepherd, found in the artistic traditions of their Pagan predecessors not only the Hermes of Calamis, but a whole series of divinities who were Kriophori, or bearers of rams. Nevertheless, it seems quite evident that they did not servilely copy any, but produced a creation which was quite original and which belongs exclusively to themselves. If they followed any ancient models at all, they must have found them in representations of purely rustic scenes ; for the essential characteristic of all the Pagan divinities we have been examining is their nudity. The Greeks did not hesitate to attribute this even to their gods and heroes. The utmost they cared to do was to throw a cloak over their shoulders, as they did over the shoulders of Hermes, but they left the front of his person wholly uncovered." ¹

Representations of Orpheus in the Catacombs.

Another figure which sometimes appears in the Catacombs, and is appealed to by Raoul Rochette in support of his theory as to the character of early Christian art, is that of Orpheus. Of this mythical hero three representations have been found ; two (that have been known ever since the days of Bosio) in the Cemetery of Domitilla, one that has been discovered in that of Callixtus by De Rossi.

In the former instances, Orpheus is surrounded by beasts, both wild and tame—doves, peacocks, horses, sheep, serpents, tortoises, a hare, a lion, and a dog ; in the latter, he sits

¹ See Note C. in Appendix.

between two sheep only ; so that he appears here simply as a substitute for the Good Shepherd.¹ But this substitution would not have been possible, had not the artist been taught to see in him some kind of figure or anticipatory shadow of our Blessed Lord, who both unites in Himself all the powers of Their mean-
nature, being Lord of heaven and earth ; and in His eternal ing.



FIG. 4.—Ceiling from a Chamber in Catacomb of Domitilla.

kingdom, reconciles in Himself manifold contradictions. And we find traces of this idea in early Christian literature. It occurs both in one of the hymns of St. Ephrem, and in a work of Clement of Alexandria.² This last-named writer begins his

¹ See Plate XVIII. 2.

² In the Ante-Nicene Library, St. Clement's Works, i. pp. 19, 20.

exhortation to the heathen by reminding them of that fabled Thracian, Orpheus, who "tamed the wild beasts by the mere might of song, and transplanted trees by music." "But not such," he says, "is my song. It alone has tamed men, the most intractable of animals, the frivolous among them answering to the fowls of the air, deceivers to reptiles, the irascible to lions, the voluptuous to swine, the rapacious to wolves. The silly are stocks and stones, and still more senseless than stones is a man who is steeped in ignorance."

Later writers, such as Eusebius and St. Augustine,¹ speak of him much in the same way as they speak of the Sibyls, as though he had made some sort of prophetic manifestation of the true God among the Gentiles. And it is remarkable, that when Alexander Severus placed pictures of Abraham and of Christ in his Lararium, he placed that of Orpheus also. His history enjoyed great popularity in the early ages of the Church, both in the East and in the West ; his figure is often repeated on medals of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, which were struck at Alexandria, and in the mosaic floors of Roman houses

in Gaul and Britain. In one instance (a Roman villa at Frampton, near Dorchester), it is said to have been found together with Neptune and Cupid, and the monogram of our Lord, which would therefore not have been earlier than the fourth century. But it never became a favourite subject among early Christian artists. They had been taught by their priests and bishops to see in the story of his taming wild beasts by the charm of his music a faint shadow of the work of Christ and His Church, softening the hard hearts of men by the preaching of the Word and the persuasive power of Divine grace ; they felt themselves therefore at liberty to introduce it into the cycle of subjects suited for decoration ; but the extreme rarity of its use shows that the introduction was not popular.

Their rarity.

Psyche.

Still more rare was the Christian use of another Pagan figure,

¹ Euseb. de laud. Const. cxiv. ; St. Aug. c. Faust. xiii. 15.

Psyche, which is sometimes objected against the religious character of the decorations of the Catacombs. This does not occur in any of the innumerable chambers in the interior of the cemeteries; but only in a chamber which was almost external to them, where it is found three times; that is to say, in one of the small chambers which was excavated outside the real Cemetery of Domitilla¹ at the same time that the *atrium* was made there, and the house of the *custode*, whereby it was brought into nearer conformity with the ordinary arrangement of the *scholæ* of Pagan clubs or *collegia*. This *cubiculum* opened out of the *atrium*, and was consequently much exposed

Psyche represented in an outer *cubiculum* in Cemetery of Domitilla.



FIG. 5.—*Psyche in an Outer Cubiculum of the Cemetery of Domitilla.*

to public gaze, at least it was always liable to be intruded on, and perhaps might even have been subject to official visitation by the Pontifices. And it is remarkable, that not a single Biblical or Christian subject is painted in it. The decorations seem to have been selected in accordance with the same spirit that dictated the famous canon of the Council of Elvira, and probably owe their origin to the same circumstances. There are birds and flowers and *putti* (sometimes winged), with whom Psyche is playing; not in any of the wanton attitudes common in profane art, but clothed in a long tunic, and occupied in filling a basket with flowers. It is obvious that such a repre-

¹ See Part I. p. 124.

sensation was perfectly innocent in a moral point of view, neither did it come within the category of proper mythological subjects belonging to idolatrous worship ; to the Pagans themselves, it hardly had a determinate religious meaning, but savoured rather of the conceits of Pagan philosophy, and was even capable of adaptation to the doctrines of the Gospel, though we need not suppose that any such adaptation was here intended.

Figures of the
seasons,
rivers, &c.

We need not say much in excuse for the half-naked figures that are used in a few of the *cubicula* to represent the seasons, the head of Oceanus, the bow of Iris, or other figures of earth and heaven, such as the reclining figures of men, who, in accordance with the conventional artistic language of the time, are once or twice made to do duty as representations of rivers, &c., &c. All these belong to a class of forms which had been long since unclothed of any mythological or religious signification, and had obtained a general human meaning. The truth is, that artists, like poets, must needs make use of received images to express the order of ideas they desire to represent, and to adopt the language of signs which they find established, on pain of not being understood. Usage stamps such images, as it stamps words, with legitimate authority ; and it would be as unjust to accuse the artist of believing in the idea out of which the image originally sprang, as it would be to hold ordinary men and women responsible for all the false history, philosophy, or theology which lies imbedded in the roots of many of the words they habitually use.

M. Renan's
statement of
the case.

We have now mentioned all the features of Pagan art with which we are acquainted throughout the whole range of the Catacombs ; and it is worth while to set our detailed account side by side with the following summary from the pen of M. Renan. "Primitive Christian art," he says, "is really nothing but Pagan art in its decay, or in its lower departments. The Good Shepherd of the Catacombs is a copy from the Aristeus, or from the Apollo Nomius which figure in the same

posture on the Pagan sarcophagi, and still carries the flute of Pan in the midst of the four half-naked seasons ; . . . Orpheus ; Pluto and Proserpine ; Pegasus, the symbol of apotheosis ;¹ Psyche, symbol of the immortal soul ; Heaven, personified by an old man ; the River Jordan, and Victory, figure on a host of Christian monuments." The reckless untruthfulness of this statement almost places it on a level with the assertion of another writer of the same school, that "the inscriptions in the Catacombs often called the dead who were buried there by the name of Christ ;" to which De Rossi could only reply by challenging the production of a single example.

It would be far easier to find examples of a mixture of Christian and Pagan ideas in art after the conversion of Constantine than during the ages of persecution. And this for two reasons : first, there were at that time many who had united themselves to the Church more by outward profession than inward conviction ; and secondly, the power of heathenism over the minds of men was much broken, so that concessions to artistic taste and the capricious fancy of individuals might now be made, which would have been dangerous before.

The change in the condition of the Christian community caused by the edict of Milan could not fail to affect Christian art in a twofold direction. On the one hand, those whose religious convictions were sincere, the children of the martyrs and confessors of the faith, would delight in extending to social and public life religious emblems and symbols which had heretofore been confined to private and religious use. On the other hand, men who embraced Christianity only because it was fashionable, would cling to ancient habits and tastes, and retain as much as possible of what they had always loved. Men of the first class might now be inclined to decorate their houses with those symbolic representations which, figured on the walls of their subterranean churches,

More admixture of Paganism in Christian art after Constantine than before.

Twofold effect of Constantine's conversion on Christian art.

¹ Pegasus is a part of the same series of paintings as Victory, and is in a Pagan sepulchre. See page 23.

had served to keep alive the memory and the love of the Gospel mysteries, and all that concerned the future life, during three centuries of persecution. Men of the second class would only remove out of sight what was expressly forbidden, and seek to give to the rest an outwardly Christian character, as far as circumstances would permit. And monuments are not wanting belonging to both these classes.

Christian symbols used on civil and domestic objects,

Bullettino,
1866, 37.
1868, 37.

and admixture of Pagan with Christian figures.

New excavations are continually bringing to light new classes of objects, of civil rather than ecclesiastical life, articles of domestic furniture and the like, ornamented with Christian emblems or mottoes. In the excavations at Porto, for example, made by Prince Torlonia in the years 1863-1866, there were discovered the ruins of a building which De Rossi believes to have been the celebrated *hospice* of St. Jerome's friend Pammachius ; and among the ruins were a silver goblet of elegant form, with a Latin cross in enamel at the bottom ; plates also of the same material, chased with a few simple lines and arabesques, and the monogram flanked by Alpha and Omega in the centre ; and a bronze lamp, in the form of a ship, the poop of which ends in the long neck and head of a griffin, holding an apple in its mouth, and on the head of the griffin is the monogram, surmounted by a dove. As an example of the opposite kind, we may instance the silver casket, richly ornamented with bas-reliefs, that was discovered in Rome at the close of the last century, formed a part of the Blacas collection, and is now preserved in the British Museum. This casket was manifestly a bridal present, and the young couple must have made profession of Christianity, yet the reliefs in the embossed work are in flagrant contradiction with such profession. On the upper side of the cover is a myrtle garland held by two naked Cupids, together with the portraits of the bride and bridegroom in half-length. An inscription runs round the rim : A  Ω, SECVNDE ET PROJECTA VIVATIS IN CHRISTO.¹ The relief on one side repre-

¹ The last four letters are certainly a modern addition ; and some persons have thought the same of the IN CHR. ; but this is not generally accepted.

sents the toilet of Venus Marina, who holds a mirror in her hand, and is attended by a Triton. On the other side, the relief shows a Nereid swimming on the waves, accompanied by a Cupid.

Such a representation as this would certainly not have been tolerated on the walls of the Catacombs; nor has anything of so objectionable a character ever been found there. Primitive Christian art may have consented to borrow something from her Pagan sister, or rather may have continued for a while to use something of what she had inherited from her Pagan parent; but it was only what was modest and innocent; and even this she soon discarded, "creating for herself a new plastic and pictorial cycle, from materials partly historical and partly allegorical."¹ At first, Christian art may have exhibited the union of new ideas with ancient forms; but the forms were already fast tending to decay, whereas the ideas were full of life and vigour, and therefore they soon found new forms in which to invest themselves.

We trust that our readers will not have been wearied by this long investigation into the relations between Pagan and Christian art. The conclusions to be drawn from it we prefer to state in the precise words of De Rossi himself.

Relations
between
Pagan and
Christian art,
according to
De Rossi.

"Down to the time of Constantine," he says, "the faithful having been brought up in the classical school of art, preserved its whole system of decoration; adopted some few of its figures which suited their purpose; and imitated their style, even whilst inventing and composing new groups to represent subjects which were directly inspired and dictated by the new religion." And then he enlarges upon each of these particulars as follows:—

1. "In the system of decoration they used much frankness and freedom, copying or changing according to their will the forms and fashions of the classical school, all of which they looked upon as quite indifferent; so that, whatever may have

¹ Müller's *Ancient Art and its Remains*, p. 205.

been the origin of some of them, or their relations with the Pagan religion, their use as mere ornaments had caused them to lose all savour of idolatry. Tertullian himself, notwithstanding his Montanist severity, recognises this important distinction between images prohibited by the Mosaic law, on account of the danger of idolatry, and those which had no connection with false worship, but were merely ornamental (*simplex ornamentum*).¹

2. "On the adoption of Pagan types, and attributing to them a Christian meaning, they were much more shy and circumspect. They did it very seldom, and it was evidently not looked upon with favour. Moreover, with fine and delicate discernment, they drew a line between what might be conceded to the requirements of prudence and the teaching and habits of the school of art in which they had been brought up, and which it was sometimes even convenient to use, and what was always and everywhere unlawful. This latter class included everything which belonged to the real cycle of polytheistic worship: to the former belonged the figures of Orpheus and Psyche, used towards the end of the second century or beginning of the third; and the seasons, and other figures representing parts of the earth or of the sea, such as the head of Oceanus, Iris, Hippocampi, and even Tritons (but these last very rarely, and only in the sculpture of sarcophagi), used in the middle and latter half of the third century.

3. "The choice of subjects from the Bible and subjects of Christian allegory was a spontaneous inspiration and outcome of the new religion, directed freely by the spirit of Christian symbolism, not suggested by Pagan traditions, nor bound down and hampered by any necessity of imitating this or that model of Greco-Roman art; sometimes, indeed, receiving aid from such models, but sometimes undeniably original."

¹ Adv. Marc. ii. 22.

CHAPTER III.

SYMBOLICAL CHARACTER OF EARLY CHRISTIAN ART.

Christian teaching and Christian art, both eminently symbolical—Interpretation of artistic symbols sometimes difficult—Instances of misinterpretation—Canons to be observed to secure correct interpretation.

BOOTH the German and the Italian writers, whose judgments we have quoted upon the relations of Christian to Pagan art, give prominent place in their estimate of the original parts of it to symbolism. It could hardly be otherwise, if Christian art was to be in any way a reflection of the Christian faith. Ancient
Christian art
symbolical.

Symbolism had been, more or less, the characteristic of all ancient religious teaching. "All who have treated of Divine matters, both Greeks and barbarians," says Clement of Alexandria,¹ "have hid the principles of things, and delivered the truth enigmatically, by signs and symbols and allegories." At the period in the world's history with which we are now concerned, symbolism was also a prominent characteristic of all art. "Instead of directly denoting the object represented," says Kügler, "the forms of art had now become the mere exponents of an abstract idea; in other words, symbols of a more comprehensive character. Instead of influencing the feelings, they now engaged the thought." He further says, that "it was the dread of idolatry which introduced and consecrated in Christian art a system of merely typical representation."

We think it would be more true to say that Christian art was symbolical, because its principal subjects were religious truths

¹ Stromata, lib. v.

So also was
ancient
Christian
teaching.

which cannot be depicted in any other way, and because, from the beginning, symbolism had been an essential characteristic of Christian teaching. It had been sanctioned by the example of our Lord Himself and of His Apostles. The parables in the Gospel are real pictures, and they are symbolical; they suggest and teach religious truths by means of sights and acts of ordinary life, invested with a spiritual meaning. But, moreover, Christianity was a religion which had been foretold and foreshadowed by the events of four thousand years; and therefore the historical facts of the Old Testament were essentially symbolical, and St. Paul says expressly that they were all "done in a figure of us, and that they are written for our correction."¹ We may venture to say that the Fathers of the first three centuries never used any other principle of interpretation of Holy Scripture. They did not, of course, deny its literal truth, but they cared infinitely more to develop its hidden or mystical sense. Before the end of the second century, a Bishop deemed it necessary to provide a book which should unfold this hidden meaning of all the words and things in the Bible, all names of places and persons, plants and animals, &c.² At a time, then, when the whole atmosphere of the Christian society was so impregnated with the spirit of symbolism, it was impossible that Christian art should not have been marked by the same character.

This principle of interpretation of the paintings in the Catacombs, when stated in these general terms, will not be called in question by any one; but there is by no means the same unanimity in the application of the principle in detail. We will first explain the way in which we understand and apply it

¹ 1 Cor. x. 6, 11. Compare Gal. iv. 23. "Which things are said by an allegory."

² This *key*, as it is called, was written by Melito, Bishop of Sardis. The Greek original is lost, but many MSS. are extant of a Latin translation, which sufficiently attest its popularity. One of these, illustrated by numerous and valuable notes, has been published in the "*Spicilegium Solesmense*" of Cardinal Pitra.

ourselves, and then briefly notice another method and state the reasons which oblige us to reject it.

We believe, then, that the main thought present to the minds of those who painted these walls and were in the habit of assembling within them, was the same as is thus expressed by St. Paul, that "our Saviour Jesus Christ destroyed death and brought to light life and incorruption by the Gospel."¹ Faith in the resurrection of the body, and in the blessed and everlasting life of souls looking forward to this resurrection, is the supreme idea and essential groundwork of all the symbolism employed on the ancient Christian sepulchres. But, then, the Christian had not to wait till death in order to begin this new life. On the contrary, he would never enjoy it at all unless he began it in this world. He must have it first imparted to him by the Sacrament of Baptism, "wherein we are buried together with Christ unto death, that as He is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life."² And it must be kept alive by means of a continual partaking of that "living Bread which came down from heaven, of which, if a man eat, he shall live for ever;" for our Lord had distinctly said, that "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you; but he that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day."³

Key of this symbolism to be found in the doctrines of the Resurrection,

Bullettino, 1865, 45.

Baptism, and the Holy Eucharist.

It can hardly be denied that, if Christians were to decorate the burial-places of their dead in any way that should reflect the doctrines of their faith, the resurrection was precisely the doctrine which would naturally take precedence of every other; and since the future life of glory is (according to the teaching of that faith) only the crown and complement of a present life of grace, it seems plain that from this dominant idea of the resurrection there must necessarily follow others, which would open a wide and tempting field to Christian artists in the signs and symbols of the Sacraments; at least of those two which, in

These doctrines most fitly represented in a cemetery.

¹ 2 Tim. i. 10.

² Rom. vi. 4.

³ St. John vi. 51-55.

their essence and in the language of Holy Scripture concerning them, are so intimately bound up with the doctrine of the resurrection.

Our readers, however, must not imagine that our explanation of the paintings in the Catacombs is derived from any *à priori* theory as to what they were likely to be; it is drawn exclusively from a diligent study of what they really are. We see a great number of subjects represented there, and this is the only key which seems to us to unlock the hidden treasures of wisdom which they contain; it is the only point of view which will embrace them all, or nearly all. And this is not our own impression only. It is shared by others also, to whom it certainly is not recommended by any doctrinal prepossessions. It cannot justly be denounced as betraying a determination to discover, in the symbols of the pure and simple faith of the first ages, "hidden indications of all the later dogmas and practices of the Church of Rome,"¹ seeing that it is acquiesced in, or rather is expressed in stronger terms than we have ourselves ventured to use,—in fact, in what we should consider rather exaggerated terms,—by art critics of repute whose Protestantism is undoubted. It is well known that the late Mr. Isidore Hemans sought to enlist the testimony of the Catacombs in the cause of Protestantism; yet in his work on "Ancient Christianity and Sacred Art in Italy," he does not hesitate to say, that "if any one could so cast away bias and prepossession as to form for himself the idea of a Christian Church exclusively from the records of the past that meet us in the Catacombs, his impartial and calmly-adopted conclusion would be that, in the worship of such a Church, all should revolve round a mystic centre of sacramental ordinances."

Once more, then, we will reassert our impression as to the general "art-teaching" of the Catacombs, as derived from an examination of the monuments themselves, and we will state it in the language of a most laborious and able art-critic, the

¹ Edinburgh Review, January 1859.

Count de S. Laurent, who says, "The idea of a new life prevailed over all other thoughts in the mind of a Christian, but not of a new life merely in conduct and action, but specially of a new life imparted by baptism, and continued uninterruptedly throughout eternity; the life of grace, of which the life of glory is only the complement. Death is passed over in silence, as being only the open door between them."¹

Some writers have sought for the key to the interpretation of early Christian art in history rather than in doctrine. Because the New Testament is virtually contained in the Old, and the law and the prophets give testimony to Christ, they think that the ornamentation of the Catacombs had for its object to illustrate the fulfilment of Old Testament type and prophecy by the historical events of the New; to insist upon the events, the prophets and the heroes, of Hebrew history as typical of Christ; and that the representation of His miracles of mercy are only intended to call to mind His life, and the cross to point to His death.² But this is quite inadequate to explain the facts of the case. Those facts are, not merely that a certain number of events or persons mentioned in the Old and New Testaments were reproduced by the ancient Christians in painting, but also that this number is extremely limited and incessantly repeated, although there were scores of other subjects contained in the same books equally fit for the artist and equally capable of illustrating the one only truth which, according to the hypothesis we are combating, it was desired to set before the people.

If we had been told that the early Christians were in the habit of decorating their burial-places and places of assembly with paintings of subjects taken from the Bible, and had been invited to speculate on the probable subjects of their choice, we certainly should not have confined the range of Christian art within those narrow limits which we find from an examina-

Historical key will not explain the symbolism of ancient Christian art.

Limited number of Biblical subjects represented in the Catacombs.

¹ Guide de l'Art Chrétien, i. 10.

² Art-Teaching of the Primitive Church, pp. 106, 218, &c.

tion of its existing monuments that it really observed. Out of the infinite variety of histories in the Old and New Testaments, which seemed to offer both fitting subjects for the pencil and useful lessons of instruction to the faithful, only a few were taken; hardly more than half a dozen out of each Testament: Noe in the ark, Abraham sacrificing Isaac, Moses striking the rock, the Three Children in the fiery furnace, Daniel in the lions' den, and the history of Jonas, from the Old Testament; and from the New, the adoration of the wise men, the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, the healing of the paralytic at the pool of Bethsaida, and the resurrection of Lazarus. Our words must not be understood too strictly, as though no other Biblical subject ever appeared in a single chamber of the Catacombs; for Adam and Eve may be seen there; Moses, too, taking off his shoes before going up to the mount; the healing of him that was born blind; of the woman with the issue of blood who touched the hem of Christ's garment; and the woman of Samaria at the well. But of these the examples are rare, whilst of the other subjects that we have mentioned, they are most abundant. Of all Biblical subjects adopted by ancient Christian art, the Good Shepherd is by far the most frequent. It is probably represented twice as often as any other subject; after this, Moses striking the rock, Daniel, Jonas, and Lazarus are repeated with great frequency; and then, but at a considerable distance, Noe, Abraham, the Three Children, and the paralytic. It may be said of all the rest, that they are comparatively rare.

Hitherto we have been insisting upon the extremely limited number of Biblical subjects represented in the Catacombs as a fatal objection to what we may call the historical school of interpretation. But there is yet another objection to be urged against them, which is no less fatal.

They are
treated sym-
bolically,

Not only were the artists limited within a narrow cycle of subjects; even these they did not treat in an historical way. Of course, it is quite possible for a composition to be thor-

oughly historical in form, and yet symbolical in sense. A fact might be represented in all its conditions of natural truth, and yet be intended to express certain ideas rather than the mere fact itself. It is obvious that this cannot be done successfully, except under circumstances where the artist can reckon with confidence that he can be understood, either by reason of a general practice conventionally established, or by means of special indications given by himself that this particular painting is to be taken not in its literal but in a symbolical sense. But, as we have already pointed out, the slightest acquaintance with the Epistles of St. Paul, or with the writings of the Fathers, is sufficient to show us how universally the method of symbolical interpretation of the Old Testament histories prevailed in the ancient Church, and how little difficulty, therefore, the Christians who frequented the Catacombs would have had in understanding all the paintings which they saw upon their walls, even if they had been executed with the strictest fidelity to historical truth.

But the fact that they were not so executed seems to force upon us the conclusion that they were never intended to be contemplated from an historical point of view, but solely with reference to some hidden moral or devotional truth which they were known to signify. We cannot, then, accept Kügler's account of the Biblical paintings in the Catacombs as an adequate statement of the truth. He says only, that "the incidents that exemplified the leading dogmas of faith were chosen in preference to others." It seems to us that they were chosen to the exclusion of all others. And it is the judgment of De Rossi, also, that "the symbolical interpretation of the hieratic cycle is established beyond all dispute, not only by the choice and arrangement of subjects, but also by the mode of representing them, and, in a few instances, even by inscriptions accompanying them."

and can only
be understood
by reference
to Christian
doctrine.

In the following pages, then, we propose to set before our readers as full an account as we can of the principal paintings

in the Catacombs, and at the same time to suggest the reason of their selection, the meaning which they were intended to convey. And the cardinal points of our system of interpretation will be the doctrines of the resurrection of the body and life everlasting, and the Sacraments which essentially lead to this, Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. No doubt, other doctrines will come before us also in the course of our narrative, but they will occupy a subordinate position ; and a probable reason for their introduction in the particular places in which we find them will sometimes be hazarded. At the same time, we do not forget that there are some pictures which are never out of place at a Christian sepulchre, and which are capable of being united with almost any Biblical subject, since they commemorate and symbolise the fundamental dogmas of Revelation. Moreover, we shall not be impatient if sometimes we fail altogether in recognising either the subject of a painting or its interpretation. In these instances, we shall follow the wise moderation of our guide, who always prefers a simple, but incomplete, record of facts to a doubtful conjecture of their meaning.

The meaning
of some paint-
ings doubtful.

Bullettino,
1867, 88.

Not every
detail of a
painting
symbolical.

We heartily sympathise with him in his dislike of too refined and exquisite a system of interpretation, adopted by some writers, who persist in seeing a hidden sense in everything, and refuse to allow to ancient Christian art the use of a single ornament that was indifferent. We shall also follow his example in seeking for the real signification of these monuments in the literary and biographical details which have come down to us concerning the persons who executed them, or for whose use they were executed.

Canons to be
observed in
interpretation
of symbolical
paintings.

We consider that the prophetic or doctrinal sense of any ancient symbol ought either to be demonstrated by written tradition, or, at least, very strongly recommended by the testimony of other contemporary monuments. And in proportion to the number and clearness of the texts or monuments that can be adduced, will be the certainty of the inter-

pretation which they support. For instance, an apparent agreement between some passage in an obscure ecclesiastical author of the ninth century, and some Christian painting of the second or third, does not suffice to prove, or even to render probable, any real identity of meaning between them ; the agreement may be merely fortuitous. But if, on the contrary, a witness or witnesses can be produced, contemporary with the artists, or with their predecessors perhaps, who had helped to form the school and atmosphere of thought in which the artists lived ; if it can be shown that certain ideas and modes of thought and expression were dominant in the Christian society at such a time, and formed a part of the common intellectual property of the faithful, we cannot hope to find a surer guide in the interpretation of the works of art of the same period. Thus, when an appeal is made in controversy to the picture of a dove or doves drinking out of a vase, as an argument from primitive antiquity against “withholding the cup from the laity” in the administration of the Holy Eucharist, intelligent readers will feel at once that violence is being done to the monuments which are professedly interpreted, since it is a flagrant anachronism to intrude upon the early ages a controversy which had not then been dreamt of. Contrariwise, if a writer, interpreting the numerous paintings of the Good Shepherd, should insist upon certain details in its execution, such as the frequent introduction of a goat instead of a sheep, as having been intended to denote the infinite mercy of Christ in receiving sinners to repentance, his explanation receives immense support, not only from the general testimony of history as to the earliest subjects of dispute in the Christian Church, but also from the very words of ancient writers,—*e.g.*, of Tertullian, who upbraids “the good shepherd and blessed Pope” of his day for using all kinds of allurements (which the Montanist writer condemns as quite unwarranted) in his invitations and exhortations to sinners ; “Seeking,” he says, “to find his goats in the parable

Instances of
use and
abuse in
interpretation.

Interpretation
by written
testimony,

of the sheep.”¹ He could hardly have expressed with greater terseness the precise act of many an artist in the Catacombs. They, too, sought to place the goats in the parable of the sheep. We have some right, then, to claim an identity of purpose in the artist and the Bishop.

by comparison
of monuments.

In the absence of written testimony, much may be learnt from a careful comparison of one monument with another. “In every investigation,” says a writer on the discovery of the sense of the Egyptian hieroglyphics, “we must assume provisionally a basis for our deductions, which, if verified, will tend to establish, or, if disproved, will refute the original assumption. But if this process be constantly repeated with success, the evidence becomes so multiplied in strength that the hypothesis is raised to a certainty. . . . A false reading of characters may possibly fit one inscription, or even a second like it in sense ; but to imagine that any false reading will fit hundreds of perfectly distinct documents, and extract from them a consistent meaning, is to assert that a practical impossibility is actually a fact.”² Precisely the same argument (*mutandis mutatis*) may justly be used as to the interpretation of the Christian symbols used in the decoration of the graves and vaults in the Roman Catacombs. And it will not be out of place if we add the caution of the same able writer, that time ought not to be wasted “by considering the doubts of the vulgar and ignorant, who merely disbelieve because the results are wonderful, and because they will not take the trouble to study the process which has revealed them.”

In the following pages, therefore, the sense of the various symbols used in the Catacombs will be determined, not by the shrewd conjectures of the learned, nor by the distorted reasonings of the controversialist, but by the strictest rules of argument and testimony ; by a comparison of the various paintings with one another, and with other artistic monu-

¹ De Pudic., c. 13.

² Mahaffy's Prolegomena to Ancient History, p. 155.

ments, and especially with the language of Holy Scripture, and of the early Fathers. Where these fail us, or seem to be inconsistent and therefore inconclusive, we are content to hold our judgment in suspense, and to await the discovery of further evidence which may throw fresh light on our obscurity. We would say of any explanation of artistic symbols that we may offer, just what St. Augustine says of his interpretation of some of the figures used in Holy Scripture, that "he desires to be understood, as having spoken without prejudice to the different opinion of any equal or superior understanding."¹ Only we must be allowed to insist, with the same high authority, that when we find anything represented which does not correspond with the truth either of history or of nature, it must be taken to be a symbol, intended to suggest some further idea beyond itself. "When this is done in a way that we are accustomed to, the understanding follows at once, and apprehends what is meant without difficulty; when it comes before us in an unusual form, the understanding exerts itself to seize the hidden meaning, and with varying degrees of success according to circumstances." And finally, we must express, in the words of De Rossi, our intimate persuasion that the interpretation which, on his authority, we offer of the paintings in the Catacombs, is never arbitrary, but founded on the comparative study of ancient monuments and the soundest and surest points of the science of Christian symbolism. It is possible that it may hereafter be partially modified in certain details, but it can never be substantially changed.

Bullettino,
1863, 45.

¹ De Doctr. Christian., lib. ii. c. 40; c. Mendac. lib. iii. in fin.; iv. 10.



BOOK II.

SUBJECTS OF PAINTINGS IN THE CATACOMBS.

CHAPTER I.

SYMBOLICAL PAINTINGS.

Two modes of arranging the paintings, according to age or subject—The latter taken first—Symbolical paintings—Meaning of some symbols universally agreed upon—Anchor—Lamb—Dove—Fish—Instances of the fish in combination with bread, as symbolical of the Holy Eucharist—Milk, a symbol of the same—Testimonies of the Fathers to this interpretation—Dolphin—Stag—Ship—Amphoræ.

Paintings may
be arranged
according to
dates or
subjects.

THE paintings in the Catacombs may be arranged either chronologically, according to the examples which have come down to us, to which we are able to assign certain or probable dates; or more scientifically, according to their subjects. Both arrangements have their advantages, and it is hardly possible to keep them altogether apart. Nevertheless, we shall endeavour, as far as we can, to consider them under these two aspects separately; and we think we shall best consult the convenience of our readers, and avoid the risk of repetition, if we give precedence to a classification of them according to subjects.

In this arrangement, it is absolutely necessary that we should

speaking first of some of the principal symbols ; without a knowledge of these, it is impossible to make any progress at all.

Symbolical paintings.

There are some symbols which may be called natural ; that is to say, there is so obvious an analogy between certain objects in nature and certain properties or qualities of character, that it never fails to be recognised even by minds of the most ordinary intelligence, and therefore needs no special explanation. For instance, spring-time and morning are natural symbols of youth ; sunset and winter, of age and death : wherever the species are found, the ant is always received as a type or symbol of provident industry, a lamb of meekness, a lion of strength, a fox of cunning, and so forth. But there are many more symbols which are entirely conventional, and can only be understood within the limits of a society that knows their origin and history. The meaning of these varies indefinitely, according to the intention of those who use them. How different, for example, was the signification of the Cross to a Pagan and a Christian mind ; to the one it represented a degrading punishment reserved for the lowest of mankind, to the other it was the very symbol of redemption. The symbols of ancient Christian art belong almost exclusively to this latter, or the conventional class, and their interpretation therefore requires careful and delicate handling. It is not a field for hasty conjectures, or the free indulgence of a lively imagination, but a real science, which cannot be mastered without much learning, prudence, and integrity. De Rossi, however, is universally acknowledged to be possessed of all these qualities in a very eminent degree ; and so long as we follow his guidance, there is no danger of our confounding mere guesses with reasonable probabilities, nor probabilities with certainties.

Some symbols are natural,

others conventional.

We will begin our enumeration of the symbols of most frequent recurrence in the Catacombs, by naming two or three whose meaning may be assumed without fear of contradiction, because they are either expressly mentioned in Holy Scripture,

The interpretation of some universally accepted.

e.g., of the
anchor,

or have always been universally accepted ; such as the anchor, for example, a symbol of hope, which was often shaped in the form of a cross, so as to suggest to the eye the very foundation

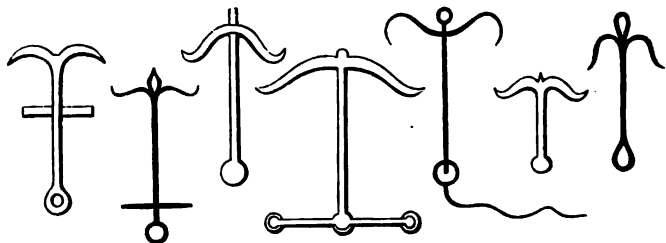


FIG. 6.—Various forms of Anchors used on Inscriptions in the Catacombs.

the sheep or
lamb,

the dove.

of Christian hope ;¹ the sheep or lamb, as a figure either of our Blessed Lord, "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world ;" or of ourselves, who are God's sheep ; and the dove, as representing both the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, and holy souls sanctified by His indwelling Presence. Instances are to be found in which the names of two or three deceased Christians appear in such immediate juxtaposition to the same number of doves or of lambs, that it cannot be doubted that the one was intended to stand for the other.² But it is hardly worth while to reproduce them here. Indeed, they are so continually engraved on the tombstones, instead of, or in addition to, written epitaphs, that they more properly belong to that part of our work than to the volume on Art.³ Here we will only remark that the dove seems more naturally, and more commonly, to have been used as the symbol of a soul already released from its earthly tabernacle and flown away to its rest ; the sheep, of a soul which still "goes in and

¹ Heb. vi. 19. See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, pp. 162-164.

² For the doves (two), see De Rossi's *Bullettino*, 1864, p. 11; and for the lambs or sheep (three), Garrucci's *Storia dell' Arte*, tav. 39, vol. 2, p. 47.

³ See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, pp. 158-162.

out finding pasture" in this life. Sometimes they are found united on the same gravestone, probably with this idea.



FIG. 7.—Tombstone (still in situ) in most Ancient Part of the Area of Lucina.

Sometimes also they are used as pendants to one another in corresponding compartments of a ceiling.

In one of the most ancient chambers in the crypts of Lucina

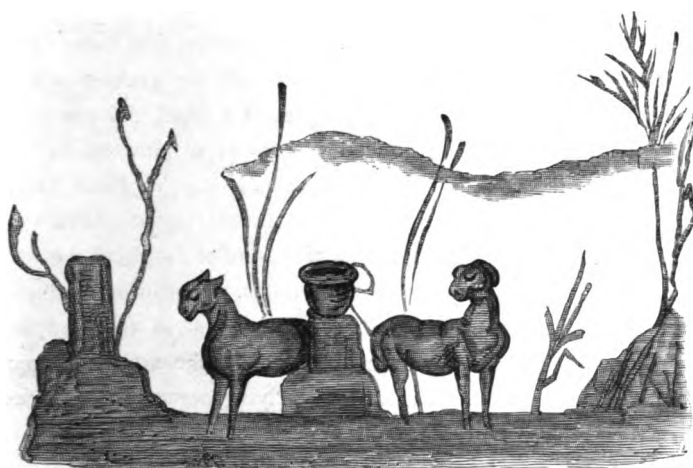


FIG. 8.—Fresco in one of the Oldest Chambers of the Area of Lucina.

near the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, two sheep are represented on one of the side walls, and on the opposite side two doves.

R.S. ii. 323.

The sheep are standing on either side of a vessel in which we shall presently see cause to recognise a type of the Holy Eucharist, and the doves are amid trees and flowers, which is a common symbol of Paradise. It is probable, therefore, that

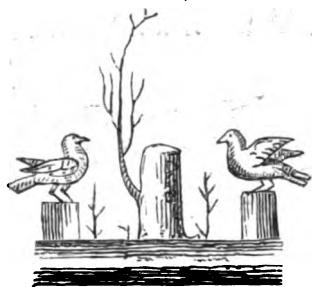


FIG. 9.—*Another Fresco in the same Chamber.*

we should here understand two Christians, strengthened during their sojourn in this world by that food which is the pledge of everlasting life, and received after death to the possession of heavenly joys.

Other
birds.

We must not, however, conclude too hastily, that every bird, either painted on the walls or carved on the gravestones of these cemeteries, was meant to represent a dove. Some birds seem to have been introduced merely as ornaments in the corners of the vaulted roofs of the chapels (*e.g.*, in Plate XII.), just as they were used by contemporary Pagan artists. In Plate XIII., also, which is a work of the end of the third century, taken from the Catacomb of St. Callixtus, the swimming ducks seem to be mere ornamental accessories, just as the jumping goats, or other horned animals, which fill the adjacent compartments, with the Bacchic thyssus lying across their backs. In Plate XIV., on the contrary, we consider the birds to be a more important part of the painting. The fruits and flowers are symbols of the joys of Paradise, and the birds are Christian souls admitted to a participation in this happiness. So also are the birds which stand on the edges of the vases and

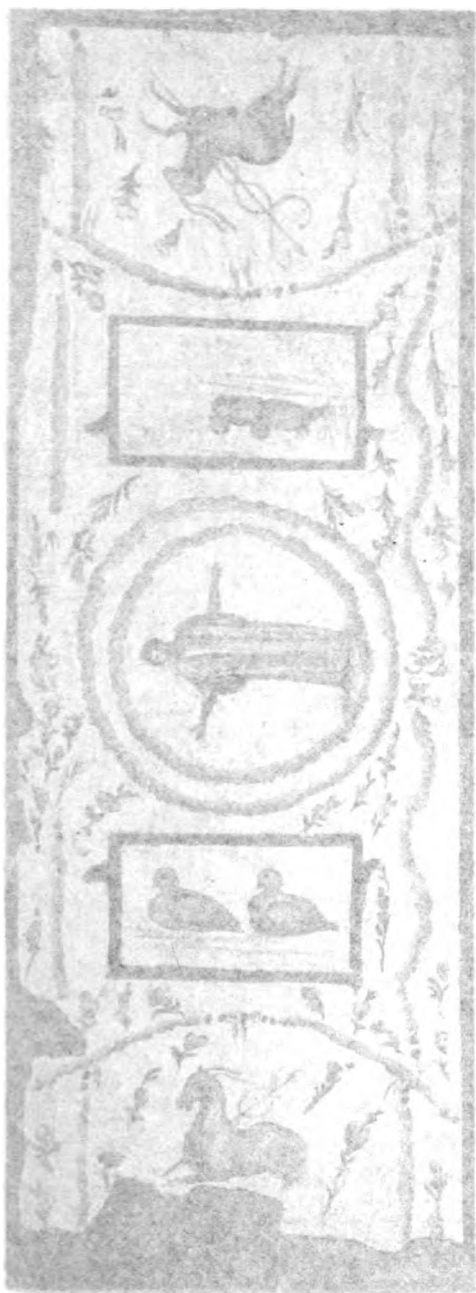




Plate XIV.





drink of the ever-flowing fountains of refreshment¹ and the birds in other monuments, which peck at a bunch of grapes or at flowers in a basket. The peacocks, too, are emblems of immortality; and in the midst of all this, the blessed dead who have attained the joys of everlasting peace are placed in the attitude of prayer. They are here also represented in human figure as men and women, with their names over their heads; a mixture of literalism and symbolism, very characteristic (as we shall hereafter see) of the age to which we have attributed the painting.

The dove is generally found with a branch of olive in its mouth, or by the side of an olive tree, and this of course is emblematic of everlasting peace; sometimes (as we have already said) with a bunch of grapes, once with a single flower. It occurs once on a gravestone, flying with the olive branch over a basket that is upset, and out of which flowers are falling. A Christian moralist, who was not an archæologist, would not hesitate to recognise in this picture a very happily-devised symbol of a soul released from the prison of this mortal body, and flying upwards, far away from the disappointing vanities of this world, into the region of everlasting joys. De Rossi, however, considers it so certain that flowers in the language of Christian symbolism stand for Paradise, and that ancient Christian art preferred to dwell on the resurrection of the body, and on the blessed life of the departed soul, rather than on thoughts of death or the vanity of human enjoyments, that he refuses to make much account of the position of the basket, but sees here only the same lesson as elsewhere, slightly varied in its mode of expression by the fancy of the particular artist.

The dove
with the
olive
branch.

R.S. ii. 312.
Tav. xliii. 1.

¹ See St. Aug. Confess. ix. 3. Speaking of his deceased friend Nebridius, St. Augustine says, "He now applies the mouth of his spirit to Thy fountain, O Lord, and drinks as much as he can," &c. *III E N Θ E O, Drink in God*, is a part of some epitaphs. It is also inscribed on drinking glasses. The same interpretation is to be given of birds pecking at grapes or other fruit.

The phoenix.

When the dove carries a palm branch, it was probably intended for the phoenix, or "palm bird,"¹ the well-known emblem of immortality. This bird is found on two or three Pagan epitaphs; and we read in the Acts of St. Cecilia, that she caused it to be engraved on the tomb of Maximus, who was martyred with her husband and his brother. It is not found, however, on many Christian monuments of the Catacombs; at least not in its usual distinctive form, as we know it in sculpture, in mosaics, and on glass, viz., with the radiated nimbus round its head. De Rossi, however, produces the figure of the phoenix as it was carved on the architrave of the ancient doorway of St. Paul's Basilica *extra muros*, where this emblem is also absent, yet the name itself being added, we are able to identify it, and he suggests that the long neck and pouting breast of some of the birds figured in the Catacombs may not be the work of careless or unskilful artists desiring to represent doves, but rather a feeble attempt to indicate the phoenix. Of the phoenix proper with a plain nimbus, he has only found two examples, one on an inscription of the year 385,² and another of uncertain date in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus.

The dove
always used as
a symbol.

The use of the dove as a symbol was continued both on the epitaphs and in the mosaics of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, with the same mystical meaning, as we learn both from the letters of Paulinus,³ and from the monuments themselves which still survive, and in some of which we see twelve doves sitting on or around the cross, to represent the twelve Apostles. At a much later period, in a Spanish MS. of the twelfth century, in the British Museum, birds flying under the blue vault of heaven have the legend, *Animæ interfectorum*,⁴ "the souls of them that were slain," which is the same as Tertullian had said a thousand years before, that birds flying

R.S. ii. 311.

¹ The Greek name for this bird and for the palm tree is the same.

² Inscript. Christianæ, I. p. 155.

³ Ep. xii. ad Severum. p. 142, ed. 1622.

⁴ Apoc. vi. 9.

up to heaven were types of the martyrs rising to God.¹ Indeed, we may venture to say that this letter of the alphabet of Christian symbolism has never been wholly forgotten or fallen into disuse.

This cannot be said of the fish, which is the next sacred symbol we would mention, the most important perhaps of all, and certainly as ancient as any, for its use grew gradually less frequent, even as early as in the first half of the third century, and may almost be said to have ceased altogether as soon as the ages of persecution had ended. On the Christian inscriptions in Gaul, which generally both begin and abandon the use of each Christian symbol nearly a century later than they were used or abandoned in Rome, there are only seven examples either of the word or of the figure of a fish among the whole number (exceeding 700) collected and published by Le Blant.²

This question of the period during which the symbol was used being one of importance, we will say a few words about it in this place, before we go on to inquire into the mystical meaning of the fish, especially in combination with other symbols presently to be mentioned. It appears, then, that there is no instance of a fish being used with any theological sense on a Christian monument later than the fifth century. Fishes, indeed, may be found carved at the bottom of fountains, or on the *ambones* of Ravenna, in the sixth century. But in these and some similar instances that might be adduced, they seem to be used chiefly for ornament's sake, and are placed among other Christian emblems which can hardly be considered symbolical at all; whereas, in the older Christian epitaphs and paintings, the fish stands alone as a manifest token of the Christian faith; and we find it so used much more frequently in the second and third than in the fourth and fifth centuries. Of all the epitaphs from the Catacombs having dates, it is found on one only after the date of Constantine, and on one

The fish: when used as a symbol.

R.S. ii. 317.

Bulletin, 1864, 10.

¹ De Resurrect. c. 52.

² Inscript. Christ., tom. I, p. 370.

before it,¹ A.D. 400 and A.D. 234. But it is found on nearly a hundred other epitaphs which, from various indications, we can refer with confidence to the first three centuries ; so that, on the whole, De Rossi considers it quite proved that, whereas we cannot say how early the mystical use of this emblem began, we are sure that it had almost, if not altogether, ceased by the beginning of the fifth century. It had become extremely rare by the middle of the fourth, so that, whereas nearly two thousand inscriptions subsequent to Constantine are ornamented with palms, crowns, birds, sheep, crosses, and monograms, only one is to be found amongst them bearing the symbol of a fish.

Why used. It follows next to inquire in what sense and for what reason the symbol was used. The thoughts of most of our readers would naturally recur to the parable in which our Lord compares the kingdom of heaven to a net cast into the sea, and gathering together of all kinds of fishes ; or again, to the words with which He called Simon and Andrew to the apostolate, saying, "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to be fishers of men." The idea, however, suggested by these passages, though not unknown either to the Christian liturgies or to Christian art, was certainly not the leading idea which directed the use of this symbol in the Early Church. The fish entered into the cycle of Christian thought and art in primitive times, partly because Christians owed their new and spiritual birth to the element of water ; partly because Christ Himself was commonly spoken of under the mysterious name of the fish.

A symbol
both of Christ
and of a
Christian.

Like the lamb, therefore, or the dove, the emblem of the fish was used in two senses. Sometimes it represented our Blessed Lord, sometimes a Christian soul. A few words must be said about both of these meanings.

¹ In estimating this statement, we must remember that we have not more than thirty dated epitaphs prior to Constantine, and more than fifteen hundred after him. See *Epitaphs of the Catacombs*, p. 37. In the inscription of 234, the fish and the anchor are found together.

First, it was used as an emblem of a Christian soul, but not exactly in the same sense in which it stands in the sayings of our Lord, but rather, because "through the waters of Baptism men are first quickened, and only live as they abide in that quickening element into which they were then brought."¹ The figure, as it is used in the language of Christ, is very appropriately enlarged upon by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, St. Paulinus, St. John Chrysostom, and others, as follows. The first-named writer, in the grand Orphic hymn commonly attributed to him, addresses our Lord as "the Fisher of mortal men," who by His sweet life entices away "from the wild ocean of the world's sea of sin the holy fish that are to be saved." Origen² observes that ordinary fish (irrational fish, as he calls them) die when they are caught, and no new life succeeds to their death; but that the fish, caught by Jesus Christ, die indeed to self, to sin, and to the world, but afterwards are made alive by the Word of God and receive another life. St. Paulinus of Nola³ says, that the Christian preacher, as the fisher of men, draws forth freely for God, by means of the hook of the life-giving Word, from the deep and bitter waves of this world, rather to give them new life than to destroy them. St. Chrysostom and St. Hilary⁴ say much the same thing, and St. Maximus of Turin⁵ expresses it very tersely, when he says *Palpitantes pisces, vivificandi homines*, "Dying fish, to be made alive as men."

All these commentaries find a very appropriate expression in art in the mosaic pavement of the Baptistery at Pesaro, of the age of Justinian, where we see a figure, partly of a man, partly of a fish, with a legend—

EST HOMO NON TOTUS, MEDIUS SED PISCIS AB IMO,

¹ Trench on the Miracles of our Lord, p. 148; to whom we are indebted for some of the passages from the Fathers which follow.

² Hom. xvi. in Jerem.

³ Ep. ad Florent. xxxii. p. 282. Ed. Antwerp, 1622.

⁴ In S. Matt. p. 677.

⁵ Serm. xcvi.

telling us that he is not yet wholly a man, but a fish in all the lower part of his body; clearly implying that as he emerges from the laver of the new birth, he will altogether cease to be a fish and become a living man. The same idea may perhaps have inspired the artist of the painting in Plate XV. 3, in which the figure of a man catching a fish is immediately succeeded by a man baptizing a child.

The fisherman is much less frequently represented in the Catacombs than the Good Shepherd; and it has been conjectured that perhaps the reason of this may be, because it only suggests the initiatory rite, and leaves out the habitual daily care for the members of Christ, after they have been brought into the fellowship of the Church. Be this as it may, it is certain that in other works of art and in other commentators, baptized Christians themselves are often represented as fish. "The two images, indeed, cannot stand together," as Archbishop Trench says, "for they mutually exclude one another; in the one the blessedness is to remain in the waters as the vivifying element, in the other to be drawn forth from them into the purer and clearer air." Nevertheless, whatever logical inconsistency may be involved in it, the fact is plain, that both ideas occur in ancient Christian writers,¹ and both are represented in ancient Christian art. We have already quoted St. Paulinus as using one of them; in another letter, the same writer makes use of it again, at the very same time that he is claiming to have been made a fish, "the son of a dolphin," through having received baptism at the hands of "a dolphin," the bishop named Delphinus;² and long before his time, Tertullian³ had said of all Christians, that we are "little fishes born in water after the example of Jesus Christ our fish." And in art a single example may suffice, such as the accompanying representation of two fish on a gravestone,

¹ In the Key of Melito, fish are explained as standing for "all the elect," c. xii. n. 25.

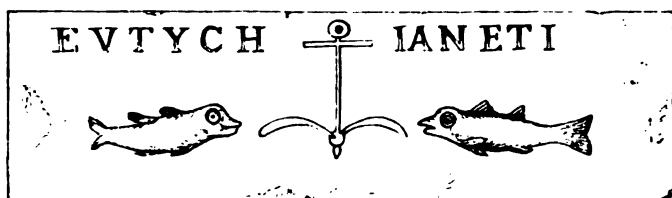
² Ep. xvi. p. 178, ed. Antwerp.

³ De Baptismo, c. 1.





i.e., of two Christians attracted towards that which is the centre and lodestone of a Christian's affections, the Cross of Christ.



Bull., 1870, 61.

FIG. 10.—*Epitaph from Prætextatus, not later than beginning of third century.*

But we must go on to speak of the other signification of the fish, contained in the passage we have just quoted from Tertullian, and already alluded to, *viz.*, that it was a symbol of Christ. It may not be possible to determine the precise history of the origin of this symbol; but the antiquity and universality of its use are unquestionable. It can be established by a catena of Fathers, beginning from Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Tertullian, in the second century, down to St. Peter Damian, in the eleventh. It is believed that it was in use even in apostolic times,¹ and suggested that famous acrostic quoted by Eusebius² and St. Augustine³ from the so-called Sibylline verses, which gives us, by taking the initial letters of so many successive lines, the Greek words IHCOTC XPEICTOC $\Theta\text{EOT YIOC \Sigma NTHP}$, "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour;"⁴ and then the initials of these several words taken together make up the word IXOTC , or "fish."

¹ See dissertation of P. Godefroy Lumper in Migne's Tertullian, i. 150.

² Oratio Constant. ad Cœt. Sanct. § 18.

³ De Civ. Dei, xviii. 23. We know from the testimony of Cicero (De Divin. ii. c. 54) that acrostics were a characteristic of the Sibylline verses. "In Sibyllinis ex primo versu cujusque sententiæ primis litteris illius sententiæ carmen omne prætexitur."

⁴ In the original, the initials of the next lines give the word $\text{\Sigma TATPOC}$, *viz.*, "Cross." In olden times it was customary in the Church of France to sing these Sibylline verses in church at Christmas with all possible solemnity. Martene, De Ant. Eccl. Rit., lib. iv. c. xii. 13.

I HΣOTC	=	JESUS
X PICTOC	=	CHRIST
Θ EOT	=	OF GOD
T IOC	=	SON
C ΩTHP	=	SAVIOUR

Probably
begun in
Alexandria.

We have already said that Clement of Alexandria¹ is the earliest witness to the use of this symbol; and it is by no means improbable that the schools of Alexandria were really the first to originate it. The Church of that city was composed largely of converts from Judaism; and it was a very common practice of the Jews to coin names for their military leaders or other great men, by means of a combination of the initial letters of some other names, or legend, or motto, closely connected with them. The name of Macchabees, for instance, is said to be made up of the initial letters of the motto which Judas Macchabeus is supposed to have ever had upon his lips and on his banners, "Who is like to Thee among the strong, O Lord?"²

Instances of
its use by the
Fathers in
this sense;

Whether, however, the Sibylline verses received their inspiration from Alexandrine Christians, or whether these verses themselves first originated the idea, at any rate we cannot wonder that when once a mystical meaning had been suggested for the word fish, it gained general acceptance in the Church. It became a sacred *tessera*, embodying, with wonderful brevity and distinctness, a complete abridgment of the Creed—a profession of faith, as it were, both in the two natures and unity of Person, and in the redemptorial office of our Blessed Lord. "It contains in one name, by means

¹ Pædag. iii. 2.

² Exodus xv. 11. See Grotius, Critic. Sac., t. iii. c. 2695. The interpretation given in the Epistle of Barnabas of the number 318, the servants born to Abraham in his house (Genesis xiv. 14), is only another example of the same kind. See a very interesting paper by P. Cahier in his *Melanges d'Archeol.* i. 192.

of its single letters," says Optatus,¹ "a whole multitude (*turbam*) of holy names." Hence Clement names the fish as one of several figures that might very properly be used on Christian seals. Origen² speaks simply and without explanation of our Lord as "figuratively called the fish;" and in every story of sacred writ connected with a fish, the early Church recognised some Christian figure or allusion. "He descends," says Optatus,³ "in baptism, in answer to our prayers, into the baptismal font, so that what before was water is now called from the fish *piscina* (*a pisce*)." "The fish which is first taken," says St. Jerome, "in whose mouth was the coin which was paid as the tribute-money to those who demanded it, was Christ, the second Adam, at the cost of whose blood both the first Adam and Peter, that is, all other sinners, were redeemed;" and elsewhere⁴ he speaks of each one of the faithful as "a fish and son of the Fish." "By that fish whereof we read, which was caught in the river Tigris, whose gall and liver Tobias took for the protection of his wife Sarah and the enlightenment of the blind Tobias, we understand Christ." It is a type of the manner in which, when Christ is near, the works of the devil are destroyed. "By the interior remedies of that fish," says St. Prosper of Aquitania,⁵ "we are daily enlightened and fed;"—words which contain a manifest allusion to the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist.

It would be easy still further to multiply quotations from the Fathers, showing how familiar to them was this identification of the fish, wherever it might be found, with our Blessed Lord. But such an accumulation of proof is unnecessary. The important thing to observe is already sufficiently clear, viz., that all these hidden meanings of Holy Scripture were

¹ Adv. Parmen. lib. iii.

² In Matt. Hom. xiii. 10.

³ Adv. Parmen. lib. iii. 2.

⁴ Ep. vii. ad Chrom.

⁵ Or the author of the book *De Promiss. et Prædic. Dei*, which goes by his name, ii. 39.

and in monuments of art.

Bullettino,
1863, 38.

The fish seldom used alone ; in paintings often found in connection with bread.

derived from the simple fact tacitly assumed by them all, viz., that the fish was the recognised conventional sign for Christ. Hence we find a multitude of little fishes, in crystal, ivory, mother of pearl, enamel, and precious stones, in the graves of the Catacombs ; some of them with holes drilled through the head, to be worn round the neck ; one with the word ΣΩΤΗΡΙΟΝ ("Mayest Thou save us!") engraved upon its back ; once, also, we find a tombstone with a Pagan inscription on either side, but now used to close a Christian tomb, and, besides chipping and cancelling the Pagan epitaph, the fossors roughly cut a fish upon the stone, in order to mark its Christian character.

Hence, also, we can interpret with certainty a number of various complications of artistic symbols into which the fish enters. And this is an important test of the truth of our interpretation. For it is comparatively easy to assign a meaning to a single symbol standing alone, since any isolated fact will often lend itself to several different interpretations. But if this symbol be found united with others of a similar character, springing from the same source, but taking a different form, and if this same meaning suffices to explain them all, it receives and communicates a light and force quite irresistible, wresting conviction even from the most unwilling mind. The differences of the symbols thus brought together mutually illustrate and perfect one another, and prove as fruitful of instruction as their resemblances. Together they fix and establish with certainty, what each, taken separately, may have left only undetermined and probable. It is in this way that innumerable questions have been decided in the interpretation of profane antiquities, and the process is as legitimate and as successful when applied to Christian antiquities.

Moreover, this test is the more easy of application here, because it happens that the fish (either the word or the symbol) is rarely found quite alone in the monuments of the Roman cemeteries. In more than two-thirds of the numerous instances in which it is repeated, it is found in union with other symbols;

and so intimately united with them as manifestly to have been intended as a part of one whole. So far as these are engraved upon the tombstones, they are explained in our account of the epitaphs.¹ Here we are only concerned with the paintings, into many of which the fish enters as an important feature, and always in combination with bread.

It will at once occur to the reader to think of the two miracles of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes; and these do appear among the paintings to which we refer, or, at least, there are manifest allusions to them; but even in these the artist continually violated the literal truth of the Gospel narrative, for the express purpose (as it would seem) of showing his intention to go beyond the letter, and to suggest another and a hidden meaning; to idealise the history, as it were, and to raise it to the height of a symbol.

But it is not to pictures of this class that we are principally referring. We are thinking rather of representations which no Biblical history will suffice to explain; such as a fish swimming and carrying on its back a basket of bread; a three-legged table with a large fish and two or three loaves lying upon it; and the same again, with two guests seated at the table, or with a man standing before it, apparently in the act of blessing what is upon it, whilst a woman stands opposite, with her hands expanded in prayer. If these are not mere caprices of the artist, it is clear that they must have been intended to render sensible some doctrine rather than to represent any fact, since there is no history to which they correspond; they were signs of religious ideas and truths, rather than imitations of facts; in a word, they were symbolical, or as Raoul Rochette calls them, ideographical paintings, not historical. To what, then, do they refer? what ideas did they represent to those for whom they were made?

In order that we may give a sure answer to this question, we must examine some of the paintings more closely.

¹ See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, pp. 131-136.

not only in allusion to the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes,

but in other non-historical scenes.

Plate XVI. 1.
2.

3.

At the top of Plate XVI., the reader will see a singular representation of a figure which is twice repeated on the wall of one of the most ancient *cubacula* of the crypts of Lucina, now united to the Cemetery of Callixtus. It is marked Y in the map.

Plate XVI. is
explained.
Map I. Y.

A fish, apparently alive and swimming, bears upon its back a basket of bread. This bread is not of the ordinary kind, but of a gray ashen colour, such as was used by the people of the East, and especially by the Jews, as a sacred offering of the first fruits to the priests, and was known to the Romans by the barbarous name of *mamphala*. The bread lies on the top of the basket, but in the middle of it, in both pictures, may be clearly distinguished a something red, a something that seems best to represent a glass containing red wine; and De Rossi produces a text from St. Jerome, of which the figure may be taken as a literal artistic translation. St. Jerome is speaking of Exuperius, Bishop of Toulouse, who had spent all his substance for the relief of the poor, and he observes that "nothing can be richer than one who carries the Body of Christ in a basket made of twigs, and the Blood of Christ in a chalice of glass."¹ In the painting before us the basket is precisely of this kind, and we know from other sources that baskets of wickerwork were used in the sacrificial rites both of the Jews and Gentiles, and that the Christians also had continued the use of vessels of the same material for carrying the Blessed Sacrament, where gold or silver could not be had.² It is certain, also, that in the early ages of the Church, the chalices were not unfrequently made of glass.³ We conclude, therefore, that this singular painting—at once the most ancient and the most simple that we know, of the fish united with bread—was intended to refer to the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. The species of the Blessed Sacrament are here visibly before our eyes. Its reality is also suggested, but veiled under the figure of the fish.

Bullettino,
1864, 90.

¹ Ep. 125, *alias* 4, ad Rusticum, tom. i. 1085, ed. Migne.

² See Marini, *Fratr. Arvali*, 396, 423; Pelliccia de Eccl. Polit., ed. Cologne, tom. ii., dissert. 1, § 2.

³ Lib. Pontif., in Zephyrino, ii.



Let us look next at the second figure in Plate XVI. Here Plate XVI. 2 explained. Plan A. is a three-legged table, with a fish and two loaves upon it, and on the ground on either side of the table are arranged seven baskets full of loaves. This is not a literal representation of either miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, though it puts us in mind of them. Neither is it a reproduction of anything that was in common use on heathen monuments of the same period. But when taken in conjunction with the third figure on the same Plate, which forms a part of the decoration of the same chamber,¹ it is hardly possible not to recognise in it a reference to the same adorable mystery. It is "the table of the Lord," spread for the Eucharistic feast.

This reference will be seen still more clearly, if we consider Feast of the seven disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, represented in Plate XVII. Plan A. another scene from the same chambers, represented in Plate XVII. This scene may be said to be partly historical, and partly symbolical, but its interpretation will find its most fitting place in the present division of our subject. It is repeated in three or four chambers successively, with some slight variation, and sets before us seven men (in one instance the figures are nude) seated at a couch-table, with dishes of fish before them, and eight or twelve baskets of bread arranged along the floor in front of the picture. And there is a history in the last chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, of which it seems to be a literal representation.

Jesus was manifesting Himself to His disciples at the described by St. John, sea of Tiberias, and the Evangelist has recorded the circumstances of the manifestation with great minuteness. Of ourselves we might not perhaps have noted anything very special in these circumstances, of such a character as to lay a singular claim upon the Christian artist above all other manifestations; nevertheless we find, that as a matter of fact it did claim their attention and occupy their pencil in a pre-eminent degree, and even to the exclusion of every other history of the same class. The details of the incident, which it is important

¹ This figure will be explained in the next chapter.

for us to observe, are these. Seven of the disciples had spent the night in fishing, but had caught nothing. But when the morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore, and bade them cast the net on the right side of the ship. They cast therefore, and were rewarded by a miraculous draught of fishes. And as soon as they came to land, they saw hot coals lying, and a fish already laid thereon, and bread. And Jesus bade them bring also of the fishes which they had themselves caught. And when they had done so, He invited them to come and dine, and "Jesus cometh and taketh bread and giveth them, and fish in like manner."¹ It is not stated that He Himself sat down and partook of the meal with them.

All thoughtful students of Holy Scripture can hardly fail to recognise in this miraculous draught of fishes a prophetic type of the success which should attend the labours of the Apostles, when engaged as fishers of men. Most of them also will probably suspect some connection between the giving of bread by Christ to His Apostles (not on this occasion only, but on others also, of His manifestation after His resurrection) with the taking of bread and giving it them in the institution of the Holy Eucharist; more especially, since on one of these occasions it is expressly mentioned that "He was made known to them in the breaking of bread."²

explained of
the Holy
Eucharist,

by St. August-
tine,

The following commentary, then, of St. Augustine on the narrative of St. John, ought not to appear strange or fanciful to any one, even though, in some of its details, it may chance to be new to many of our readers. He says that "in the dinner which the Lord made for those seven disciples, of the fish which they had seen laid upon the coals, to which He added of the fish they themselves had caught, and of bread, Christ who suffered was really the fish that was broiled (*Piscis assus, Christus passus*);³ He is also the bread, 'the bread which

¹ St. John xxi. 1-13.

² St. Luke xxiv. 35.

³ Melito of Sardis had said the same before him, in his "Key:" "*Piscis in mensâ cum fâvo mellis positus, Christus tribulationis igne assatus.*"



came down from heaven.' The fish caught by the Apostles are the Church, which must be incorporated into Christ, in order to become a partaker of everlasting happiness; we ourselves, and all true believers to the end of time, are represented by those seven disciples" (the number seven being often used in Holy Scripture for completeness or universality), "that so we may understand that we too have a share in so great a Sacrament, and are associated in the same happiness." And he concludes—"This is the dinner of our Lord with His disciples, with which St. John finishes his Gospel, though he had many other things to say about Christ, *magnâ ut existimo et rerum magnarum contemplatione*;"¹ as though he would say, This history forms a suitable conclusion to the whole Gospel, because it "exhibits a kind of link or transition from Christ's earthly to His heavenly kingdom;"² inasmuch as it sets forth under a veil, or in a mystical manner, the union of all Christian souls with Christ their Head, first, by means of the bread from heaven, the Holy Eucharist, in this world, and then in that yet more intimate enjoyment of Him in the next world, whereof the Sacrament of the altar is at once a pledge and a foretaste.³

We have said that no thoughtful student of Scripture can justly object to this interpretation of St. John's words by the great Doctor of the West, as though it were the mere fruit of his own imagination, since it rests upon principles which are even now universally acknowledged; but this is far short of what might have been said. For the truth is, that in the early ages of the Church no other interpretation of the narrative was ever dreamt of. So unanimous is the *consensus* of the Fathers in seeing here a mystical representation of the Holy Eucharist, that Cardinal Pitra tells us he can only find a single

and the rest of
the Fathers.

¹ In Joann. Ev. Tract. 123, sec. 2, tom. iii. p. 2460, ed. Gaume.

² Keble on Eucharistical Adoration, c. ii.

³ "In capturâ piscium commendavit Ecclesiæ Sacramentum, qualis futura est ultimâ resurrectione mortuorum."—St. Aug. *ubi supra*.

ancient writer (the pseudo-Athanasius) who does not so interpret it. We shall content ourselves with quoting here one testimony. Prosper Africanus, commenting upon this same passage of the Gospels, speaks of our Blessed Lord as "that great Fish who satisfied from Himself (*ex se ipso*) the disciples on the shore, and offered Himself as a fish (ΙΧΘΥΝ) to the whole world."¹

Other Scriptural notices of fish, similarly explained of the Holy Eucharist.

Moreover, we must remember that this is not the only passage of Holy Writ in which the Fathers recognised the Blessed Sacrament of the altar under the same symbol. We have already² quoted one who speaks of Christ as "that Fish from whose interior remedies we are both enlightened and fed;" referring, of course, to the history of Tobias, on the one hand, and to the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, on the other. St. Augustine also,³ speaking of the authority given to man at the creation over the fishes of the sea, is immediately reminded of these same Sacraments, which he describes as "that solemnity whereby those whom God's mercy seeks out amid many waters are first initiated, and that other solemnity wherein that Fish is manifested, which, when it has been drawn forth from the deep, pious mortals eat." These words could not have been written by St. Augustine, or at least they would have been absolutely unintelligible to his readers, unless the idea of the fish as a symbol of the Holy Eucharist had been perfectly familiar to them; and no one can reasonably call in question our right to attribute to Christian artists the same ideas upon this subject as were so manifestly familiar to Christian preachers.

Also the miracle at Cana, and the multiplication of the loaves and fishes.

But there were, more especially, two of our Lord's miracles in which the Fathers saw distinct foreshadowings of the mystery of the Holy Eucharist;⁴ viz., the miraculous multiplications of the loaves and fishes, and the changing of water

¹ De Promiss., ii. 39.

² See page 63.

³ Confess., xiii. 23.

⁴ St. Ambrose in St. Luc., c. ix.; lib. vi. 84; De Virginibus iii. 1; St. Cyril Alex., Catech.



FIG. 11.—Painting from the Catacomb of Alexandria, symbolical of the Holy Eucharist.

into wine at Cana in Galilee. These miracles had no connection historically, either with the dinner which has just been spoken of, or with one another ; but because all these events had the same symbolical meaning and referred to the same mystery, therefore the Christian artists delighted to bring them together. Thus, as we have already mentioned, a number of baskets of bread always forms the foreground of the picture of the feast of the seven disciples. Moreover, because they desired that the minds of those who saw their paintings should not rest in the outward semblance of the scene, but be carried forward to its hidden and mystical meaning, they continually departed, more or less, from its literal truth ; *e.g.*, we rarely find either seven or twelve baskets of bread, but eight ; a number which does not belong to either narrative ; and not six water-pots of wine, but seven. It was the symbolism of a religious idea they aimed at, and not the representation of a real history.

Nor was the use of this symbolism confined to the artists of Rome. An ancient Christian cemetery has lately been discovered in Alexandria, subterranean, and in other respects also bearing a certain resemblance to the Roman Catacombs. In one of the

Similar paintings in a Catacomb at Alexandria.

chapels, and precisely over the altar where the sacred mysteries would have been celebrated, there are the remains of a painting, belonging (De Rossi believes) to the first half of the fourth century, though retouched perhaps in some points at a later period, in which all these various scenes are brought together, and their interpretation given in writing. That is to say—In the middle is our Blessed Lord, with Peter on His right hand and Andrew on His left, holding a plate with two fish, whilst several baskets of loaves lie on the ground before Him. Further to the right is the miracle at Cana, our blessed Lady and the servants having legends over their heads, —Η ΑΓΙΑ ΜΑΡΙΑ—ΤΑ ΠΑΙΔΙΑ—"HOLY MARY" and "THE SERVANTS;" and in the corresponding compartment on the other side are a certain number of persons seated at a feast, with a legend over their heads, ΤΑΣ ΕΥΛΟΓΙΑΣ ΤΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ ΕΣΘΙΟΝΤΕΣ—"Eating the benedictions of Christ."

Now, this same word, which we have here translated *benedictions*, is the word used by St. Paul¹ when speaking of the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. The verb belonging to it is used by the Evangelists indifferently with the corresponding verb of the Eucharist, both in their account of the miracles of multiplication, and also of the institution of the Blessed Sacrament.² And it is the very word always used by St. Cyril of Alexandria (in whose city this painting is found) to denote the consecrated Bread and Wine; and when the devotion of the faithful waxed less fervent, and Communions became more rare, the same word was naturally retained, and has ever since continued, to denote the blest bread which was now received instead of It.³

¹ 1 Cor. x. 16.

² St. Matt. xiv. 29; xv. 36; xxvi. 26, 27. St. Mark vi. 41; xiv. 22. St. Luke ix. 16; xxii. 19. St. John vi. 11.

³ On a little vessel of the fifth century, which may have been used for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, our Lord is represented with the rod in His hand before the water-pots at Cana, and the same word, *εὐλογία*, is engraved above the scene. Its reference to the Holy Eucharist cannot be doubted. Bullettino, 1872, pp. 7, 21, tav. ii. 1.

Here, then, we have the evidence of the Christian artist himself, that the two miracles we have referred to were understood and used as "a kind of sacramental anticipation" (to use the words of St. Maximus)¹ "of the chalice of the New Testament." He brings together two events which were historically distinct, and unites them by means of the mysterious rite which they both foreshadowed. He even introduces into his composition an historical error, substituting St. Peter for St. Philip, thereby showing what was in his mind, viz., that the Apostles on that occasion were not to be considered personally, but rather prophetically, as St. Hilary² says, as types of those whose duty it should be in all future ages to distribute the true bread and wine, the Bread of Life and the cup of salvation. And he has thus furnished us with a most precious monument, proving the identity not only of Christian doctrine, but even of Christian artistic symbolism both in the East and West. We have shown the same truth elsewhere by an appeal to Epitaphs; we have shown that the same doctrines were expressed by the same forms in Rome and Alexandria, in France, in Egypt, and in Phrygia.³ Every baptized Christian understood them, whether he lived on the banks of the Tiber or of the Po, of the Loire, the Euphrates, or the Nile. In all these parts of the world, writers in books, poets in hymns, preachers in sermons, artists in painting, the very masons themselves on the gravestones, made use of the fish in this symbolical sense, without a word of explanation. It is evident that, however unmeaning the figure may have been to Pagan eyes, or however strange it may seem to our own who are no longer familiar with it, it was as perfectly intelligible to contemporary Christians as the hieroglyphics of ancient Egypt to those who used them, or the letters of the English alphabet to Englishmen.

The same doctrine and the same symbolism in all parts of the Christian world.

¹ Hom. i. de Epiph.

² Comment. in Matt. xiv. 10, 11; Opera, tom. i. p. 740, ed. 1730.

³ See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, pp. 134-136.

Summary of
evidence, and
importance of
the conclusion.

We fear this discussion may have appeared somewhat long and tedious, perhaps, to some of our readers, or at any rate out of place, yet it was not possible to avoid it if we desired to show that we are building on solid foundations. For we have been accused of wishing to force upon the paintings of the Catacombs a meaning they will not bear, whereas we most sincerely desire to ascertain what their meaning really is; and we have thought the best means of doing this is to compare them with all that we know of the thoughts and feelings of those who executed them, or for whom they were executed. We have been accused of "attempting to connect the fish with the doctrine of Transubstantiation." What we have really done is to prove that when fish and bread were represented together on ancient Christian monuments, there was often intended a secret reference to the Holy Eucharist, of which the bread denotes the outward and visible form, the fish the inward and hidden reality, viz., Christ Jesus our Lord.

And the light which is thus acquired for the interpretation of Christian symbolism enables us to understand at once the language of other monuments, which, without it, would hardly have been intelligible. What is the meaning, for example, of the figures on the following gravestone, lately dug up in Modena, and

R.S., i. 350.

SYNTROPHION



FIG. 12.—*Ancient Christian gravestone, dug up in Modena.*

supposed to belong to the third century? Nobody will believe that they were a mere idle conceit of the stonemason. It is possible they may have been intended merely as an historical reminiscence of one of our Lord's miracles. But it is certainly more probable, because more in harmony with what we now know of the modes of thought and forms of artistic speech which were in common use among the early Christians, that

they represent that heavenly Bread which is the supernatural food of the faithful. (Again, on a sarcophagus of the fourth century, in the church of St. Trophimus, at Arles, there is the multiplication of the loaves and fishes; but opposite to Christ, as He works this miracle, is an altar on which lies a fish in a plate. Who can refuse to-day to recognise in this strange figure an allusion to the altar of the Eucharistic sacrifice and the secret meaning of the Christian hieroglyphic, the fish? Before the recent discoveries, this was only a conjecture of acute and learned antiquarians, who were convinced by the frequent union of these symbols that there existed some reciprocal relation between them; but the pictures which have come to light in the Catacomb of St. Callixtus leave no room for doubt.

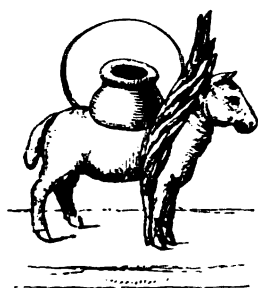


FIG. 13.—Lamb carrying the milk-pail, repeated in each corner of the roof of a chamber in the Catacomb of SS. Peter and Marcellinus.



FIG. 14.—Milk-pail and shepherd's crook by side of lamb from Catacomb of Domitilla.

In the beginning of this chapter we mentioned another painting as having probably been intended to be a symbol of the same subject. It is a painting on one of the side walls of the same chamber in which the fish is represented bearing a basket on its back; and it consists of a milk-pail resting on a

Lamb carrying
milk-pail ;

R.S., i. 348.

kind of altar between two sheep,¹ and the same instrument may be seen in the next chamber, on the right-hand side of the Good Shepherd. It appears also in other places, either by his side or in his hands. In these latter instances, it might not unreasonably be taken as merely one of the ornamental accessories of pastoral life, inserted without any religious signification, but its position in the other example seems to indicate something more important. So also when we find it, as in some most ancient pictures in the Cemetery of Domitilla, suspended from the pastoral staff and by the side of the lamb ; or, as in a later painting in the Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus, resting on the back of the lamb itself, we are reminded of the undoubted fact that milk was often used as a symbol of the Holy Eucharist.² Indeed, the lamb carry-

ing the milk-pail on its own back seems exactly analogous to the fish carrying the bread ; and the reader will observe that, in Fig. 13, it is the vessel which is surrounded by the *nimbus*, and not the lamb.

similarly
interpreted
by the Acts of
St. Perpetua,



FIG. 15.—Lamb carrying milk-pail.
From Cemetery of Priscilla.

The Acts of St. Perpetua³—universally accepted as a genuine document of the beginning of the third

century—describe, as a part of the vision by which that saint was consoled and strengthened in prison, the Good Shepherd appearing to her, milking his flock, and giving her to eat some of the curds of the milk which he had drawn. “She received them with hands crossed upon one another, and all the people answered, Amen,”—just the word and the action then used in partaking of the Holy Eucharist. She understood that what she had seen was meant to be a symbol of this, for she at once concluded from it that her martyrdom was

¹ Fig. 8 in page 53.

² Buonarroti, Vetri, 32 ; Garrucci, Vetri, 62, 63, ed. 2da.

³ Apud Ruinart, ed. Verona, p. 32.

imminent, because it was by this Blessed Sacrament that the Church always strengthened the martyrs for their last conflict. Something of the same kind occurs also in other ancient Acts. The old commentators point out that the good things of the Gospel are foretold by the prophets, sometimes under the figure of flesh, sometimes of wine, sometimes of milk, but all having reference to the same adorable mystery which is the Gospel feast *par excellence*.

Still more distinctly, Clement of Alexandria¹ says that “the Church nurses her children with holy milk ; and that this milk is the child fair and comely, the Body of Christ which nourishes the young brood. . . . ‘ Eat My flesh and drink My Blood,’ He says. Such is the suitable food which the Lord ministers, and He offers His flesh and pours forth His Blood, and nothing is wanting for the children’s growth.” And St. Irenæus² says, that whereas “ Christ might easily have come to us in His immortal glory, we could not have endured its greatness ; wherefore, being the perfect bread of the Father, He offered Himself to us as milk, because we were like infants. He did this when He appeared as man, that we, being nourished, as it were, from the breast of His flesh, and having by such a course of milk-diet become accustomed to eat and drink the Word of God, may be able also to contain in ourselves the Bread of immortality, which is the Spirit of the Father.” It is clear that the thoughts of both these writers, when speaking of the Divine condescension as manifested in the Incarnation, run upon milk as the natural food of infants, and the Holy Eucharist as the supernatural food of Christians, as two cognate ideas ; and it is precisely in the same sense, therefore, that we understand the use of the same symbol in ancient Christian art.

We will add yet one more witness to the meaning of this

¹ *Pædag.*, lib. i., c. vii. In translation of Ante-Nicene Library, pp. 138, 145.

² *C. Hæres.*, iv. 38. 1. In Ante-Nicene Library, vol. ii. p. 42.

and August-
tine,

symbol, though he belongs to a later date ; but his authority is very great, and he only repeats in a more distinct and elaborate manner the tradition which we have already seen in the writings of earlier Fathers. St. Augustine is commenting on the title of the thirty-third Psalm,¹ which refers to an incident in the life of David, not exactly as it is recorded in the historical books : that is to say, in the Book of Kings the incident is told of one person, and in the title of the Psalm it seems to be attributed to another. And the Saint argues that this change of name has not been made without a reason. He inquires, therefore, into the mystical meaning of the whole incident, which he maintains it certainly *must* have, whether we can discover it or not, because every other part of the history of the Jewish people has such a meaning ; and he appeals to his hearers as knowing this fact as well as he does. He specifies amongst other details of Jewish story which foreshadowed mysteries of the Christian Church, the manna, the passage through the Red Sea, and the striking of the rock.

He then speaks of David slaying the giant Goliath, as a type of Christ killing Satan :—"But what is Christ who slew Satan? It is humility slaying pride. When then I speak to you, my brethren, of Christ, it is humility that is specially commended to you. For He made a way to us by humility. . . . God was made humble, that so the pride of the human race might not disdain to follow the footsteps of God." And he continues immediately as follows :—"But there was, as you know, in former times a sacrifice of the Jews according to the order of Aaron, with victims of cattle ; and this, too, was in a mystery, because, as yet, there was not the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of the Lord, which the faithful know and those who have read the Gospels ; which sacrifice is now spread abroad throughout the whole world. Put, then, before your eyes those two sacrifices ; the former one accord-

¹ Enarrat., 1^{ma} in Ps. xxxiii., tom. iv. p. 301, ed. Gaume.

ing to Aaron, and this one according to Melchisedec. For it is written, 'The Lord swore, and will not repent; Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedec.' Of whom is this said, 'Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedec?' Of our Lord Jesus Christ. But who was Melchisedec"? Then, after giving the history of Melchisedec, and calling particular attention to his priesthood, to the blessing which he gave to Abraham, and to his having brought forth bread and wine, he continues, "The sacrifice of Aaron, then, is taken away, and the sacrifice according to the order of Melchisedec has begun to be. . . . Our Lord Jesus Christ has willed our salvation to be in His Body and Blood. But whence has He commended to us His Body and Blood? From His humility; for except He were humble, He would not be eaten and drunk. Consider His greatness: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' Behold this everlasting food; but food for Angels. Angels eat of it, and the powers above, and heavenly spirits; and eating, they are filled and satisfied; yet, that which satisfies and gladdens them still remains whole. But what mortal could approach that food? Whence could he have a heart suitable for such food? It was necessary that that food should be made milk (*mensa illa lactesceret*), and so come to little ones.

who speaks
of the sacrifice
of the Body
and Blood
of Christ,

"But how does meat become milk? How is meat changed into milk, unless it first be passed through flesh? And this is done by the mother. What the mother eats, the same is also eaten by the infant; but because the infant is not fit to eat bread, the mother changes the bread into her flesh (*ipsum panem mater incarnat*), and so feeds the infant on that very bread, through the lowliness of the breast and the juice of milk. How, then, has the Wisdom of God fed us on bread? 'Because the Word was made flesh, and dwelt in us.'

and the Holy
Eucharist,
under the
symbol of
milk.

"Behold then His humility; for man has eaten the bread

of Angels, as it is written, 'He gave them the bread of heaven; man ate the bread of Angels;' ¹ that is, man has eaten of that Word whereon the Angels feed, and which is equal to the Father; for 'being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God.' The Angels feed on Him, but 'He debased Himself,' that man might eat the bread of Angels, 'taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men and in habit found as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,' in order that from the Cross might be commended to us the new sacrifice, the Flesh and Blood of Christ."

It cannot be disputed, then, that the milk-pails to which we have called attention in early Christian monuments probably had a religious symbolical meaning, though we do not pretend to put this on the same level with the symbol of the bread and the fish; because the examples of the one symbol are comparatively rare, and its interpretation is supplied only by the language of a few, whereas the other was incessantly repeated in every variety of combination, and its meaning is attested by a vast multitude of authorities.

Other
symbols.

We have now enumerated the principal symbols which formed the basis of Christian decorative art, as displayed in the Catacombs; and we shall have occasion to describe some of the compositions in which they appear, in a future chapter; there still remain a few other symbols which entered occasionally into the cycle; but of these the interpretation is for the most part so simple, that it is hardly necessary to adduce testimony in its support. We will briefly mention two or three of them.

The Dolphin.

First, there was the dolphin, which, according to the fabulous stories that were told about it in ancient times, might almost be considered, as Cardinal Pitra says, "a natural type of the Saviour of the world."² Athenæus calls it "most

¹ Ps. lxxvii. 24.

² Spic. Solesm., iii. 519.

loving of men," *φιλανθρωπίτατος*; ¹ and hence, both in Greek and Roman sculpture, it was a very favourite image on Pagan sepulchres; dolphins swimming on the surface of the water were by no means uncommon, as a symbol of happy souls swimming to the isles of the blest; and both in Christian *Bullettino*, 1869, 16. *R.S.*, ii. 353. paintings and on the sarcophagi, they are to be seen bound to a trident, or in connection with an anchor or some other object belonging to the sea. Some persons have imagined that this traditional use of the dolphin was the real origin of the conventional Christian symbol of the fish, which has been already explained. But the careful study of the chronology

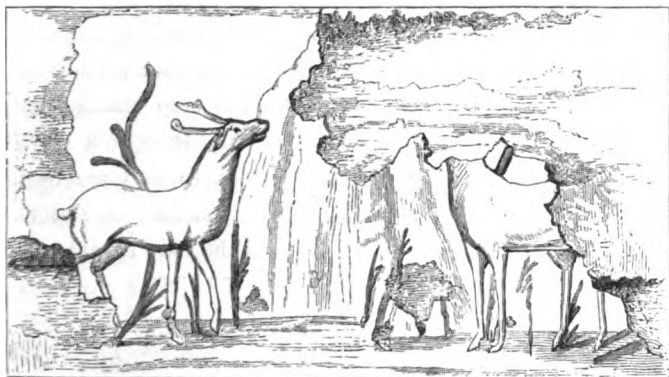


FIG. 16.—Stags drinking, from the Cemetery of St. Callixtus.

of our monuments entirely destroys all foundation for this conjecture; the dolphin was certainly represented by Christians at one time in preference to any other species of fish; but this preference is not manifested in any of the earliest paintings; *e.g.*, the fish carrying the basket of bread is certainly not a dolphin, neither is the fish of "the sacramental chambers," as they are called.

Another symbol was the stag, slaking its thirst at the streams of water which flow forth from the mystical mount of God, wherein David has taught us to see an emblem of *The Stag.* *Bullettino*, 1865, 11.

¹ Athenæus, xiii. 30, apud Spic. Solesm., iii. 519.

the human soul panting after God during its exile in this valley of tears. This, too, does not appear among the more ancient paintings. We give a specimen of one of the very few representations of this subject that we are acquainted with in the Catacombs. It is a work of the fourth century, and belongs to the extreme limits of the Cemetery of St. Callixtus. When this scene was represented in the mosaics of the apses of the Basilicas, and on the sculptured sarcophagi of the same period, either Christ Himself, or some emblem of Him, such as the Lamb, or the Cross, stands on the top of the mount ; and perhaps some such figure was here also. If so, it must have been the lamb ; there is no room for any other.

Ship.

On some gravestones we see a ship approaching a harbour, and are of course reminded of a Christian soul attaining the haven of its rest. Sometimes also the ship stands clearly for the whole Christian Church ;¹ which, though it may be much tossed by the waves and driven to and fro by the winds, yet is never submerged, and preserves in safety all who remain in her. In two instances the ship is represented

R.S., ii. 317.

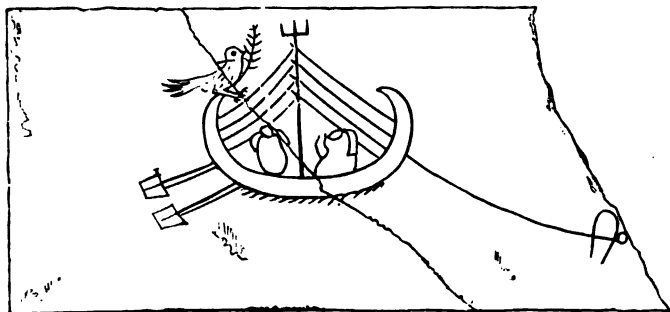


FIG. 17.—*Boat, laden with vessels (souls), guided by the Holy Spirit as a dove.*

with the cross for her standard,² guided by the Holy Spirit under the form of a dove, whilst its precious freight of souls

¹ St. Maximus of Turin. Hom. i. p. 154 ; Hom. lxxxix. p. 642 ; ed. Romæ.

² On the use of the trident as a disguised form of the Cross, see De Rossi's *Roma Sotterranea*, ii. 317.

is figured under the very homely guise of *amphoræ*, or vessels of various kinds. These figures appear also, of various

Amphora, or Vase.

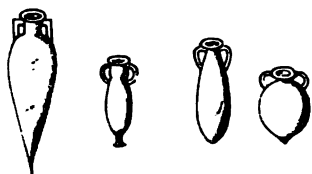


FIG. 18.—Different forms of vessels on gravestones in the Catacombs.

shapes, on a large number of gravestones; and their symbolical meaning is declared by a written epitaph found in the Catacombs of Cyriaca which says DIONISI VAS

As Dionysius is here called

 *Bullettino*, 1867, 27. R.S., ii. 325.

“a vessel of Christ,” we have a right to conclude that the same meaning was intended when, instead of the word being written, the object itself was drawn. And we call to mind the words of our Lord addressed to Ananias concerning St. Paul, viz., that he was “a vessel of election to carry His name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel;”¹ also the words of St. Paul himself,² in which, after using, in illustration of his argument, the figure of a potter making out of the same lump of clay “one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour,” he speaks of wicked men as “vessels of wrath,” and the good as “vessels of mercy.” The same language is used also by some of the early Christian writers;³ but Lactantius, Prudentius, and St. Jerome⁴ apply it to the bodies rather than to the souls of men, as though the soul had been temporarily detained in the vessel of the body, so that when the vessel is broken, the soul is delivered. St. Paulinus of Nola, too, if he is the author of the metrical epitaph of Cynesius, in the Basilica of St. Felix, has the same idea, saying of men’s souls at the general resurrection, that they will return to their own vessels (*rursum in sua vasa redibunt*).

¹ Acts ix. 15.

² Romans ix. 22, 23.

³ Tertullian de Patient. c. x. St. Ephrem, Orat. in St. Basil. St. Pacian ad Symp. ep. iii. § 26.

⁴ Anima, fracto vase testaceo, erumpet. St. Hier. Epist. 23 ad Marcellam. Lactant. de Div. Inst. ii. 12. Prudent. Peristeph. v. 301–304.

CHAPTER II.

LITURGICAL PAINTINGS.

Specimen of symbolical paintings, illustrating the Sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, executed in the third century—General description of them—Explained by the writings of Tertullian and others—Moses striking the rock—Fisherman—Act of Baptism—Paralytic carrying his bed—Bread and fish—Act of consecration—Feast of seven disciples by Lake of Tiberias—Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac—Resurrection of Lazarus—Other liturgical scenes elsewhere—Union of same subjects in later paintings more historical than symbolical.

Paintings partly symbolical, partly Biblical, but essentially liturgical.

THE paintings of which we are to give an account in the present chapter do not really differ in kind from those which were described in the last, or those which will be brought before us in the next. In truth, some of them are highly symbolical, others Biblical. Nevertheless, they are so carefully selected and skilfully combined, with reference to the Sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, that they well deserve the name which we have given them of liturgical, and the chambers in which they are found are known to all visitors of the Catacombs as the chambers of the sacraments.

It might have been thought that the impenetrable secrecy which in ancient times shrouded the sacred mysteries from the gaze and knowledge of the profane, would have rendered any sensible representation of them by art on the walls of the Catacombs quite impossible. But it must be remembered that these paintings were executed at a time when the invasion of the subterranean cemeteries by the heathen had not yet taught the necessity of caution. Moreover, by a clever use of Christian symbolism, and a mixture of things natural and supernatural, simple and allegorical, the artist has contrived to produce a work which, whilst eminently liturgical in character, and plain

enough and of the highest interest and value to us, yet to an uninitiated stranger must always have been absolutely unintelligible. The administration of Baptism, for example, is mixed up with Biblical histories and allegories of various kinds ; and the consecration of the Holy Eucharist is both complicated by means of the hieroglyphic sign of the fish, and also veiled under various historical scenes taken from the Old and New Testaments.

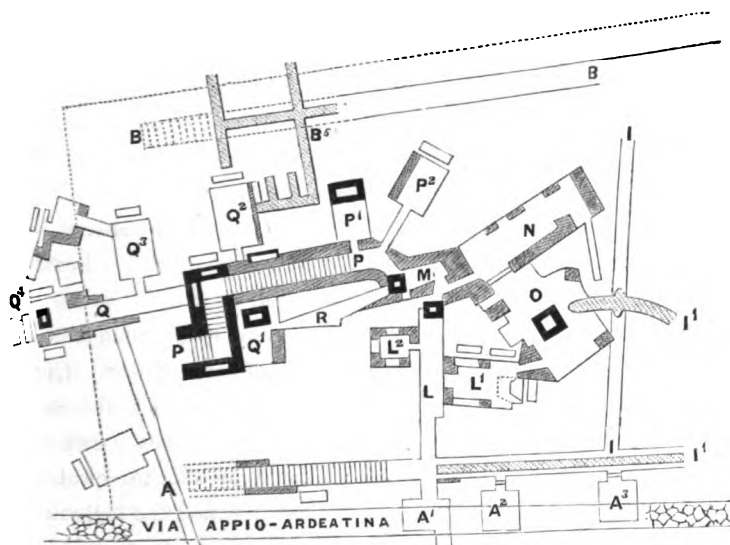


FIG. 19.—Plan of Papal Crypt, L. Crypt of St. Cecilia, O, and Chapels of the Sacraments, A', A'', A'''.

These paintings deserve to be examined in the most minute detail. They are to be found in that series of *cubicula* in the immediate neighbourhood of the Papal crypt, concerning which it has been already shown ¹ that they were all made about the same time ; the oldest, perhaps before the end of the second century, the latest, certainly at no very advanced period in the third. In three of them, the paintings are too much destroyed to enable us to recognise all their details ; but as far as we can judge from the fragments which remain, they were of the same

¹ See Part. I., page 491.

subjects, and of the same general character with those of the two oldest chambers, which we propose to describe.

Plan A₃.

We will first set before our readers a plan of one of the chambers, which will enable them more easily to understand the relative position of the subjects, and the general arrangement of the whole, which is the same in all; and then we will proceed to examine one or two more closely in detail.

General
description
of them.

Plate XV. 2.

On the wall, at the left of the door as we enter (*a*), is the figure of a man striking a rock, whence water gushes forth. On the first side wall (*b*), we see a man fishing, and then another man baptizing a youth who stands in the same water. The

Plate XV. 3.

paralytic carrying his bed on his shoulder concludes the series on that side of the chamber. On the principal wall, or that which faces the doorway (*c*), we see a three-legged table, having on it bread and fish, with a woman standing on one side of it

Plate XVI. 3.

in the attitude of prayer; and a man on the other, clad only in the *pallium*, extending his hands, and especially his right hand, towards the table in such a way as to force upon every Christian intelligence the idea of the act of consecration. This

Plate XVII.

is followed by a scene of seven men sitting at table with bread and fish before them, and eight baskets of loaves arranged along the floor; and then Abraham about to offer up his son

Plate XVIII. 1.

Isaac—a scene easily identified by the ram and the faggot of wood at their side. These three scenes are painted, side by side, on the interval between two graves; and they are flanked at either extremity by a full-length figure of a *fossor*, with his left arm extended and a pickaxe resting on his right shoulder.¹ The painting on the third side of this chamber (*d*) has perished, all the plaster having fallen to the ground and been reduced to dust. But the plaster of the small recess on the right-hand side of the doorway is still perfect, and shows us two figures, not standing side by side, but one placed on a higher level than the other (probably in consequence of the narrowness of the

¹ In Plate XVIII, 3, 4, we have given representations of *fossors* in the act of working, taken from other chambers of this series.



2.



3.



space). One of these is a man seated, who might be supposed to be teaching from a long roll, probably of parchment, which he holds in his hands; the other seems to be drawing water from a well which is already overflowing.

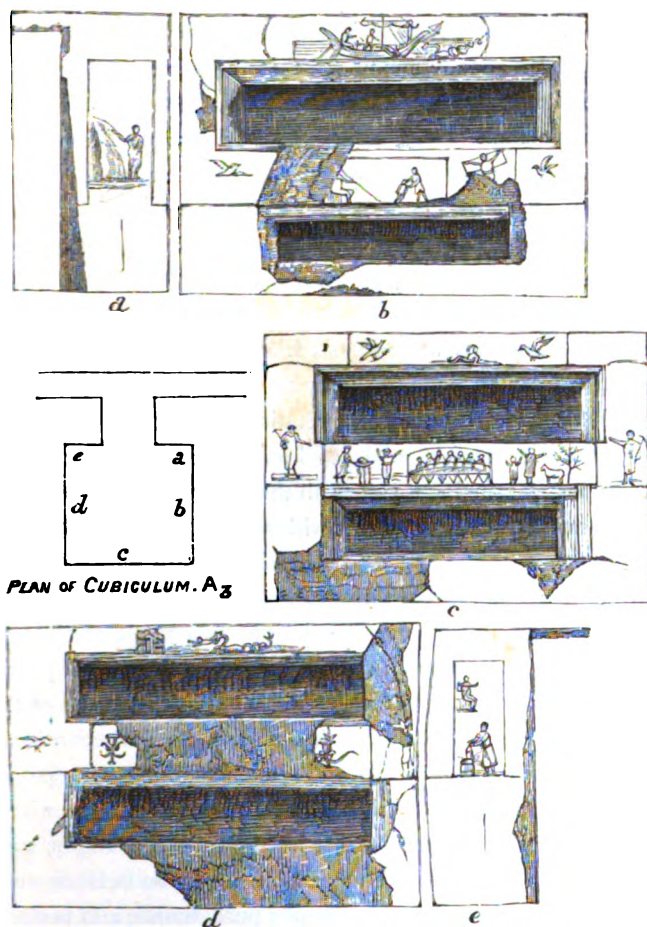


FIG. 20.—*Plan of one of the Chambers of the Sacraments.*

In the second chamber, we find the rock, the fisherman, the *Plan A₂*, feast of seven, the baptism, and the sitting teacher, much the same as before, only with some variation of detail, e.g., the

water from the rock forms the river in which the fisherman is fishing (see Plate XV. 1). On the right-hand wall, which in the former chamber was in ruins, we distinguish the raising of Lazarus from the dead ; and whilst on one side of the doorway is a preacher standing, the fragments of plaster found on the other show that a *fossor* had once been represented there.

It has been already mentioned that the same subjects, with more or less of variation, appear to have been reproduced in the other chambers of this series. Such frequent repetition naturally suggests the presence of some hidden sense ; and it will be worth our while to explain with some minuteness what that sense is, deriving our information as far as possible from the testimony of contemporary writers.

Their meaning
explained by
Tertullian in
his treatise
De Baptismo.

A single author, Tertullian, who was in Rome about the time that these paintings were executed, and can hardly fail to have seen them, can be made to supply all, or nearly all the guidance that is needed for their interpretation. Let us look into his treatise upon Baptism, and see how he handles the subject.

Summary of
that treatise.

He begins by bringing together all that Holy Scripture contains about water ; and he does this with such minuteness of detail, that he is presently obliged to check himself, saying that, if he were to pursue the subject through all Holy Scripture with the same fulness with which he had begun, men would say he was writing a treatise in praise of water rather than of Baptism. From the first chapter of the Book of Genesis to the last of the Evangelists, and even of the Apocalypse, he finds continual testimony to the high dignity and sacramental life-giving power of this element. The Spirit of God, he says, moved over it at the first ; whilst as yet the earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the heavens were as yet unformed, water alone, already pure, simple, and perfect, supplied a worthy resting-place on which God could be borne. The division of the waters was the regulating power by which the world was constituted ; and when at length the world was set in order, ready to receive inhabitants, the waters were the

first to hear and obey the command and to bring forth creatures having life. Then, again, man was not made out of the dry earth, but out of slime, after a spring had risen out of the earth, watering all its surface.

All this he gathers out of the first two chapters of Genesis, and here he makes a pause, breaking into that apology which has been already mentioned. Then he resumes the thread of his discourse, but passes much more briefly over the remainder of the Old Testament. He notes how the wickedness of the old world was purged by the waters of the Deluge, which was the world's Baptism; how the waters of the Red Sea drowned the enemies of God's people and delivered them from a cruel bondage; and how the children of Israel were refreshed during their wanderings through the wilderness by the water which flowed continuously from the rock that followed them, "and the rock was Christ."

Then he comes to the New Testament, and briefly but eloquently exclaims: "Nowhere is Christ found without water. He is Himself baptized with it. He inaugurates in it the first manifestation of His Divine power at the wedding-feast in Cana. When He preaches the Gospel, on the last and great day of the feast He stands and cries, 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink.' He sums up His whole gift to man under the image of a fountain of water, telling the Samaritan woman that He has living water to give, which shall become in him that receives it a fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting. When He gives instruction upon charity, He instances a cup of cold water given to a disciple; He sits down weary at a well and asks for water to refresh Himself; He walks on the waves of the sea, and washes His disciples' feet; finally" (Tertullian concludes), "this testimony of Jesus to the sacrament of Baptism continues even to the end, to His very Passion; for, when He is condemned to the cross, water is not absent—witness the hands of Pilate; nay, when wounded after death upon the cross,

water bursts forth from His side—witness the soldier's spear."

There may be something in this symbolism that sounds strange to modern ears ; but, as we have said before, we have nothing to do with its merits or demerits, but only with the fact of its general use by ancient commentators on Holy Scripture, whence we have every right to suppose that Christian artists would have used it also.

St. Cyprian
uses the same
imagery.

We will only quote one other witness, a fellow-countryman of Tertullian's, and writing fifty years later, whose frequent correspondence with Rome would have made him specially familiar with the traditional teaching of that Church, whether addressed to the ear or the eye. St. Cyprian agrees with Tertullian in identifying the water which flowed from the rock in the wilderness with the waters of Baptism ; he says that there is but one fount of water in Holy Church, which makes us the sheep of Christ ;¹ and in another place,² that it was foretold that if the Jews would thirst and seek after Christ, they should drink with us Christians, *i.e.*, should obtain the grace of Baptism. "If they should thirst in the desert," says Isaias (xlvi. 21), "He will lead them out : He will bring forth water out of the rock for them, and cleave the rock, and My people shall drink." "And this was fulfilled in the Gospels" (St. Cyprian continues), "when Christ, who is the Rock, is cleft with the stroke of the lance in His Passion ; Who, reminding them of what had been foretold by the prophet, cried aloud and said, 'If any man thirst, let him come and drink ; he that believeth in Me, as the Scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' And that it might be made still more clear that the Lord spoke here about Baptism, the Evangelist has added, 'Now this He said of the Spirit, which they should receive who believed in Him ;' for the Holy Spirit is received by Baptism."

Such was the language of Christian writers in the third

¹ Epist. lxxi.

² Epist. lxiii. 8.

century ; and the artist who painted the chambers which we are examining, did but repeat the same lesson in his own way, when he painted first the figure of Moses striking the rock, whence the waters gushed forth for the refreshment of the children of Israel ; next, a man engaged in fishing, the Divinely-chosen emblem of the Apostolic ministry ; and lastly, another man engaged in the very act of pouring water over the head of a youth. Surely no one can doubt that the Christian sacrament of Baptism stands here plainly revealed, yet in a manner veiled, under the "typical parallelisms" (to use Lord Lindsay's expressive phrase) of the Old Law, and of certain symbolical actions of common life.

Many persons are of opinion that the same mystery is again set forth in the next painting, the paralytic carrying his bed. Those who have ever visited the (so-called) Catacomb of St. Agnes with Father Marchi, will remember that he used always to identify this painting with the sacrament of Penance, supposing it to refer to the man that was healed at Capharnaum, to whom our Lord addressed those words, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee ;" and, indeed, that miracle is expressly quoted in the Apostolical Constitutions as symbolical of this sacrament. It is objected, however, that it would have been out of harmony with the prevailing tone of thought and practice among the Christians of the days of persecution, that grievous sin and repentance should have been represented as a probable interlude between the sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. De Rossi, therefore, considers it far more probable that all the paintings on this wall were intended to have reference to Baptism (just as all those on the next speak clearly of the Holy Sacrament of the Altar) ; and that we must understand this picture, as representing that other miracle wrought on a paralytic at the pool of Bethesda, which Tertullian, Optatus,¹ and others, have interpreted as typical of the healing waters of Baptism.

The paralytic carrying his bed, typical of Baptism, or perhaps of Penance.

Plate XV. 3.

¹ Tert. De Baptismo, c. 5 ; Optat. De Schism. Don. ii. 6.

Father Garrucci, on the other hand, thinks differently, and insists on the correctness of Father Marchi's interpretation. He urges in support of his opinion, that the artist has distinctly cut off the paralytic from the subjects which have reference to Baptism, by placing him outside the lines within which the fisherman and the act of baptizing are enclosed.

For ourselves, we can quite understand the repugnance felt by De Rossi and others, to supposing that the artist intended to set before a Christian congregation in those days the idea of a probable loss of the supernatural life once received. "We speak of God's pardons," says a Christian writer of the fourth¹ century, "not to those who are in the enjoyment of His grace, but to those unhappy men who have lost it; we reveal this secret, not before sin has been committed, but after it." On the other hand, we know that there were *lapsi* in all ages, and that there were special reasons, even at this very time, why "the second plank" of penance should be set prominently before those who had thus made shipwreck of the faith. We can understand, therefore, why the rulers of the Church should have made use of the figure of the paralytic carrying his bed as a consoling memorial of the gracious goodness of God Who had "given such power unto men"—"power on earth to forgive sins." On the whole, then, we think that it must always remain doubtful to which miracle, and therefore to which sacrament, this picture would be more properly referred; whether to the man who was healed at the pool of Bethesda, in which case the waters of Baptism would be understood, or to him who was brought to our Lord, lying in a bed, and to whom He said, "Be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee," thereby foreshadowing the sacrament of Penance. In either case, the painting is not out of place in the series; it is sacramental, at least, if not liturgical, in character.

We will pass on to the next three pictures, which form a group by themselves, most intimately connected with one

¹ Pacianus Epist. ad Sempron. i. 5.

another, and following upon what has gone before (in which-ever sense it be taken) in strict theological sequence. It is exactly the same train of thought and combination of ideas which occur in the ancient epitaphs of St. Abercius and of Autun,¹ in both of which there is a natural and easy transition from the waters of Baptism to the heavenly Fish of the Holy Eucharist. Moreover, we must not forget that, according to the ecclesiastical discipline of those days, these two Sacraments followed one another much more closely than they do now; they were, in fact, often administered on the same day.

The next pictures denote the consecration and participation of the Holy Eucharist.

There are certain details, however, in the mode of representing the symbols of the Holy Eucharist in these paintings, which require a few words of additional explanation. Some persons, for instance, might take exception to that which we have called a picture of the consecration, in consequence of the insufficient clothing of the man we have supposed to be the priest. He is clad only in the *pallium*, and as he stretches out his hand over the table, his breast and arm, and one whole side of his body become much exposed.

Consecrating priest clothed in the *pallium* only.

The *pallium* was the characteristic dress of Greek philosophers, and especially of the Cynics. Whether it was ever adopted as the sacred dress of the Christian clergy is much disputed. Eusebius² mentions of Justin Martyr, that he "preached the Word of God in the dress of a philosopher;" but it is not certain that he was a priest. Before him, Aristides of Athens, and after him Tertullian, Heracles, a priest of Alexandria, Gregory Thaumaturgus, and others, did the same. Tertullian expressly defends and applauds, with his usual eloquence and subtlety, this mode of dress in his treatise "De Pallio."³ He concludes with these words: "Rejoice, O

¹ See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, pp. 134-136.

² Hist. Eccl. iv. 11. See also the opening of Justin's Dialogue with Trypho.

³ See note at beginning of Oehler's edition of this treatise; Leipzig, 1853, tom. i. 913. Also St. Hieron. Ep. lxxxiii., ad Magnum. Catal. Hom. III. cxx. *Humernum exertus*, is the very word used by Tertullian, c. 3.

Pallium, and exult; a better philosophy claims thee now, since thou hast become the vestment of a Christian." But this does not prove that it was worn at the altar; and Father Garrucci and others are very confident that it was not. He maintains, therefore, that in the picture before us it is not any individual priest in the act of consecration that is here represented, but rather the whole Christian priesthood idealised as the appointed teacher of mankind.

When Faith is personified by Prudentius in his "Psychomachia," he paints her as coming down to do battle with idolatry, attired almost in the very same way as the man before us. He represents her as carried away by the eagerness of her zeal, and descending into the arena but imperfectly clad, with bare arms and shoulders, and other limbs uncovered.¹

St. Cyprian, who lived about fifty years later than Tertullian, denounced the vainglorious immodesty of the bare breast of the heathen philosophers,² and spoke of Christian teachers, by way of contrast, as being philosophers not in words but in deeds, not making any outward show of wisdom by their dress, but holding it in truth. And Minucius Felix had made the same remark, saying that "we manifest our wisdom not in the outward dress but by the mind." The Council of Gangra (A.D. 340) pronounced an anathema against those who, through a supposed exercise of piety, used the *pallium*, as if thereby they possessed justice, and dared to condemn others who with modesty used the finer dress of their neighbours. Pope Damasus, too, condemned it, as being the dress in which all the statues of the heathen gods are represented.³ Nearly a hundred years later, Pope Celestine (A.D. 428) condemned

¹ "Agresti turbida cultu,
Nuda humeros, intonsa genas, exserta lacertos,
... nec telis meminit nec tegmine cingi,
Pectore sed fidens valido, membrisque retectis."—Vv. 21–25.

² De Bono Patientiæ, § 2. 3. "Exerti ac seminudi pectoris invecunda jactantia."

³ Rom. Pont. Epist., p. 536.

very severely certain bishops of Vienna and the South of France, because they "follow a superstitious fashion, and contrary to the practice of the Church, gird their loins and wear the *pallium*, obeying the letter of Scripture rather than its spirit." ¹

All these later facts are of no direct value, as illustrating the sense in which a certain painting was designed in the third century. Incidentally, however, they are of some importance as testifying to the use of the *pallium* as a religious garment, if not an ecclesiastical one, in earlier times. They are evidence of a certain change of taste and feeling upon the subject which had come over the Christian mind between the beginning of the third century and the end of the fourth and the fifth; and in point of fact, almost all the later pictures of men, painted in the Catacombs, represent them as clothed with the tunic underneath the *pallium*. Thus the later *dicta* of the Church upon the subject seem to provide some sort of criterion as to the date of these paintings in San Callisto—a date which precisely agrees with the result to which we had been led before by a multitude of concurrent indications of a totally different kind.

Another detail in these paintings which has been made the subject of some discussion, is the true meaning of the woman who stands opposite to the priest, with outstretched arms, in the attitude of prayer; whether she is intended to represent some deceased lady, buried in this chamber, or whether she does not rather stand as a symbol of the Church. Looking, however, at the whole character of this series of paintings, we cannot doubt that the latter interpretation is the more correct. Just as the person represented here as receiving Baptism is a mere boy, or very young man, not because the artist intended to denote some one determinate person who was really of that age, but because youth is the age of Baptism (and it was even customary to call neophytes, of whatever age they might be,

The Church
represented by
a woman.

¹ Constant. Rom. Pont. Epist., p. 1066.

infantes or *pueri*);¹ so, in like manner, at the table of the tremendous mysteries, a woman was represented, not because it was desired to do honour to any particular lady whose tomb might be near, but rather because, when the whole body of the faithful was spoken of, it was most usual to speak of them under this figure.

Both in the Epistles of St. Paul and in the writings of the most ancient Fathers, the Church is the Bride of Christ, without spot or wrinkle. A woman, therefore, became a very natural artistic symbol of the whole Church. Thus, in the old mosaics, *e.g.*, of Sta. Sabina in Rome, put up by Pope Celestine in the earlier half of the fifth century, the legends under two female figures expressly designate them as *Ecclesia ex Gentibus*, and *Ecclesia ex Circumcisione*—*i.e.*, the Church from the Gentiles and from the Jews; and it is certain that these mosaics preserved, with more or less of modification, the ancient artistic types rather than created new ones. Indeed, the tradition of this symbolical language was continued very long among Christian artists—*e.g.*, it occurs in liturgical illuminations of a Paschal candle in a MS. of the Barberini Library, belonging to the eleventh or twelfth century, and it is not an uncommon ornament in the carving of the portals of mediæval churches.

However, whether the female figure who stands here in prayer be really meant for the Church, for the personification of faith, or for some one Christian soul, is comparatively unimportant. It is her position and occupation which command our attention. She is praying by the side, and in the presence of, the Blessed Sacrament, thereby reminding us of the words of St. Cyril,² "that those prayers are most prevailing which are made with the consecrated gifts lying open to view."

Of the seven men who follow next, seated together, and partaking of bread and fish, we have already spoken at some

¹ See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, p. 130.

² Lect. xxiii. 9, Oxf. Trans. 275.

length; but we must add here, in answer to a German critic who would fain transfer the reference from the Blessed Sacrament to the eternal banquet in heaven, first, that the mere uniformity in all these paintings of the number and sex of the guests, would alone suffice to distinguish them from the representations either of the *agapæ* or of the joys of paradise. Specimens are not wanting of either of these subjects, and in both of them women appear as well as men, and in varying numbers.

The feast of the seven disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. Plate XVII.

Moreover, the position and adjuncts of the feast in these particular chambers seem absolutely to determine its sense. In one instance, where the two scenes are compressed into a single wall of the chamber, it stands side by side with the representation of Baptism. In another, where a type or figure of each Sacrament is joined with its literal representation, as the fishing is next to the baptism, so the consecration of the Holy Eucharist is next to this entertainment. To doubt, then, of its application to the Sacrament of the Altar, especially when we remember how universally the history was so interpreted by ancient Christian teachers, seems a wilful closing of our eyes against the truth, and can only be accounted for by the rejection of the ancient doctrine which the symbol expresses.

We have seen that after the paintings of the fishing and the baptizing, there followed, on the same wall, the paralytic, which is therefore, with great probability, referred to the same Sacrament. Here also upon this wall is a third scene, that of Abraham and Isaac,¹ which, in like manner, must be connected with the Holy Eucharist; and although the same German critic, already referred to, finds a difficulty in accepting a figure of the Bloody Sacrifice on the cross as a suitable

The sacrifice of Isaac typical of the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Plate XVIII. i.

¹ Both are represented as praying,—a faggot and the ram behind them alone enable us to identify them. Eight or ten frescoes of the same subject from the Catacombs are given by Garrucci in his "*Storia dell' Arte Cristiana.*"

figure also of the unbloody sacrifice on the altar,¹ his scruples will scarcely be considered conclusive, even by his co-religionists. For surely the sacrifice of Isaac by his father might, in some respects, claim to be considered a more lively type of the sacrifice of the Mass than of the sacrifice on Mount Calvary; since, although, as St. Paul twice repeats, Abraham "offered up his only-begotten son," yet the blood of Isaac was not really shed; he was only "as it were slain."² Abraham "received him from the dead for a parable."³ The offering, then, of Isaac by his father is frequently sculptured on the Christian sarcophagi of the fourth and fifth centuries, together with other Biblical stories prefiguring the priesthood and sacrifice of the New Law. Here it is the pendant, so to speak, to that other picture already described, wherein the priest is consecrating; "filling the place of Christ," as St. Cyprian⁴ speaks, "imitating what Christ did, offering a true and perfect sacrifice in the Church to God the Father."

The series concludes with the resurrection of Lazarus.

Not a vestige remains of the principal subject which was painted on the remaining wall, opposite to the paintings of Baptism. Nevertheless, we have ventured with confidence to supply it from the corresponding picture in the next chamber. It was the resurrection of Lazarus, which to the Christians of that age would have seemed the most natural, and almost necessary, complement to representations of the Holy Eucharist. Not only did the language, which Our Blessed Lord made use of on occasion of that miracle, bear a very striking resemblance to parts of His discourse upon the Blessed Sacrament,⁵ but He had also seemed to connect the resurrection to everlasting life in so special a manner with the eating of His flesh and drinking His blood, that the Fathers always speak of the one as a kind of pledge and earnest of the other. We may

¹ Yet it is expressly named in the Church's hymn, "Lauda Sion," *In figuris præsignatur, cum Isaac immolatur*; and in the Canon of the Mass it is named with the sacrifices of Abel and of Melchisedec.

² Apoc. v. 6.

³ Heb. xi. 17, 19.

⁴ Ep. ad Cæcil. 63, aliter 62.

⁵ Cf. St. John xi. 25 with vi. 58, &c.

see from the language of Prudentius¹ how naturally the Christian mind passed from one of these subjects to the other; as when he suddenly stops in the midst of his reflections upon the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, bearing upon their relation to the Holy Eucharist, and then, as though he feared that he was in danger of revealing secrets forbidden to profane ears, abruptly addresses himself to Lazarus, as the next subject of which it would naturally become him to speak. Jesus had said about the Blessed Sacrament, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day." At the tomb of Lazarus He uttered those solemn words, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live; and every one that liveth and believeth in Me shall not die for ever."

It is to be observed that Lazarus is not here represented in the way in which he was usually represented in paintings of the latter part of the third and in the following centuries, viz., as an adult, and swathed like a mummy just emerging from the tomb, but rather as a youth, having the winding sheet hanging loosely about his person, as though more distinctly to mark him as an ideal and allegorical, and not an historical personage.

It is not necessary that we should draw out at length the hidden sense of that series of paintings of the history of Jonas, with which the upper part of these walls is covered; their bearing on the trials of this present life and the hope of a future one is sufficiently obvious. But the reader will observe that this historical series of paintings, as we may call them, are kept quite distinct from the more mystical series, which form the principal part of the decoration of the chamber.

Scenes from
the history of
Jonas.
Plate XIX.
1, 2, 3.

¹ Bis sex appositi, cumulatim qui bona Christi
Servarent, gravidis procul ostentata canistris—
Sed quid ego hæc autem titubanti voce retexo,
Indignus qui tanta canam? procede sepulcro
Lazare. Dic, cujus vocem tellure sub imâ
Audieris, &c.—*Apolheosis*, 740-745.

Supplement-
ary paintings
of doctors
and *fossors*
explained.

There remain, however, two other figures on which we ought to make some observations. One of them is seated,



FIG. 21.—*The Raising of Lazarus. From the Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus. Bosio, p. 387.*

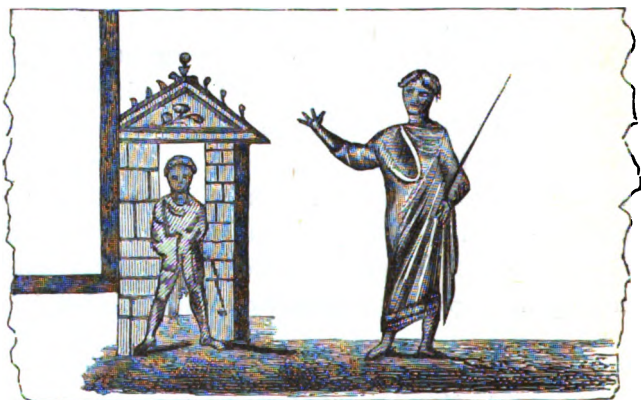


FIG. 22.—*The Raising of Lazarus. From Sacramental Chamber A³.*

apparently in the act of unrolling a volume, or, at least, holding a long roll of parchment in his hands; the other stands,

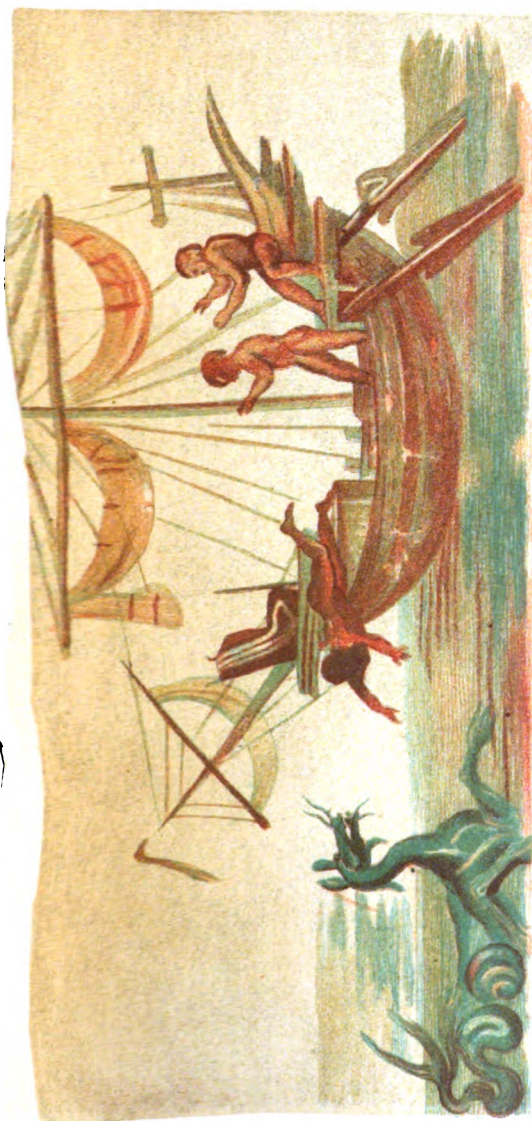
There remain, however, two other types of methods we have not yet mentioned. One of them is seen in the following example:



in the case of a β -phase nucleation, the β -phase nucleation rate is given by

[illegible]

...a long roll of equipment in his hand, a copper stake



drawing water from a well which is already overflowing. In the next chamber, the same figure or figures appear, once standing, once sitting, but on both occasions holding a book, and seemingly engaged in the work of instruction, and wearing the same ascetic dress of Pagan philosophers as the priest whom we have spoken of as consecrating.

Our first impulse at sight of the well with its overflowing waters is to refer it to the conversation of our Blessed Lord with the Samaritan woman at the well,¹ wherein He promised to give water to them that believe in Him, such as should "become in them a fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting." And, doubtless, this would be a very beautiful and appropriate termination to a series of symbolical paintings, beginning with the stream of grace, drawn from the Rock of Christ, and now ending with the Well of Living Water and the promise of eternal life. It seems pretty clear, however, that the person at the well is a man, and not a woman. And a more careful consideration of the subject has led De Rossi to adopt another interpretation. He supposes this figure to represent a Christian doctor of the faith, either in the abstract, or some one individual, as Zephyrinus, or possibly Callixtus himself, who perhaps devised this whole symbolical series, and is then commemorated in them, just as the mere material workmen (the *fossors*) were also represented on the same walls. He takes the drawing of the water at the well to be only an expression in art of what Origen had said in words, when he speaks of "the Well whence spiritual waters are to be drawn for the refreshment of the believers;"² and that the reason for making use of these unusual memorials of individuals was the fact that this cemetery was the first which had belonged to the Church in her aggregate capacity.³

This same reason explains also the exceptional character of the whole system of decoration that was adopted in these

¹ St. John iv. 14 ; vii. 37, 38.

² Hom. XII. in Num., tom. ii. p. 311-314.

³ See Part I., p. 144-146.

This whole series seems inspired by authority.

chambers. They form one uniform group, adorned with the same symbols and in the same style, freely changed in their composition and arrangement, yet constant in their hidden meaning and theological sense; whereas in all the other *cubicula* of the same area there is no trace of the same system of decoration. It may well be doubted whether any private individuals would have ventured on such bold representations of the sacred mysteries for the adornment of their family vaults; neither would every artist have had sufficient theological knowledge to design them. On many accounts, therefore, they seem to bear the stamp of authority; they almost read like an official summary of Christian doctrines, a short catechism addressed to the eye; and they are certainly one of the most interesting monuments of ancient Christian art that have come down to us.

Gradual abandonment of the more mystical symbols.

Before taking leave of them, there is one more remark which they suggest, that is worth recording, with reference to the order in which the several classes of paintings succeeded one another in the development of Christian art. It is certain that these chambers were excavated in the very earliest period of the third century, if not in the end of the second; and there can be no doubt that the paintings were executed at the same time, and, as we have said, the same subjects (in the main) were painted in all of them. But it has been shown in our analytical examination of the process of making this portion of the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, that three of the chambers, A⁴, A⁵, A⁶, were made in what we have called the second period of excavation, after the floor of the galleries had been lowered. And De Rossi points out that it is possible to trace a gradual decline of symbolism corresponding to the successive periods of excavation. In the first two chambers, A², A³, the ancient symbols, and the use of signs which he calls merely hieroglyphic, reach their fullest development. In these, historical scenes from the Bible are mysteriously intertwined, or (to use his own word) compenetrated, with parables and sacramental rites. Here the fish appears on the Eucharistic table as a

R.S., ii. 347.

secret sign of Christ, quite isolated, without any accessory, giving it the appearance of an historical memorial ;—the seven baskets of bread are spread round the singular tripod of bread and fish, and are, in like manner, quite detached from any apparent historical reference. But in the somewhat later chambers of which we are now speaking, this mysterious language grows more faint and feeble, and the weakness increases

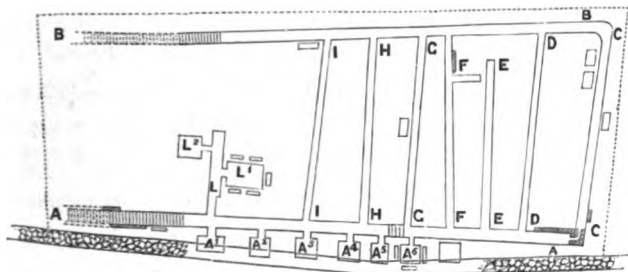


FIG. 23.—Second Period of Excavation.

according to the order of succession in which the topographical and architectural analysis of the chambers obliges us to arrange them. In A^6 the purely allegorical and hieroglyphical figures disappear. There is no fisherman, no baptism ; but the Biblical stories, still preserving their ancient meaning, and represented according to the old mystical types, acquire a predominant importance. The scenes from the history of Jonas no longer occupy a higher space upon the walls, leaving the lower space to the uninterrupted representation of the Sacraments ; but they are brought down and intermixed with the Sacramental pictures themselves, whilst the space they had occupied before is now filled with mere geometrical patterns and a few birds. In the next chamber, A^5 , there is still greater elimination of the symbolical element. Ornamental heads, birds, and other devices of mere decoration prevail so much as to exclude Moses, Lazarus, and the greater part of the history of Jonas. And in A^4 the same tendency has gone still farther. Coloured lines and patterns, two fossors, two *oranti*, entirely usurp the place of the more secret and mysterious emblems.

CHAPTER III.

BIBLICAL PAINTINGS.

Biblical subjects treated symbolically, not according to historical truth—Noe's ark typical of the Church and the waters of Baptism—Jonas, of the Resurrection—Question of the gourd, or ivy—Form of the fish taken from the story of Andromeda—Daniel in the lions' den—Three Children in the fiery furnace—Adoration of the wise men—Moses striking the rock—Resurrection of Lazarus.

Biblical subjects treated symbolically, not historically ;

AFTER what has been said in a former chapter,¹ our readers will not expect that they have heard the last of symbolism because we are now to speak of subjects taken out of Bible history. They already know that the ancient Christian artists did not select these subjects either for their own sakes as histories, nor for their artistic value as compositions, but for the sake of what was associated with them in the mind of the Church. They neither treated them accurately as facts of history, nor yet freely as subjects of the imagination, but strictly with a view to their moral or dogmatic signification. Hence they are generally represented in one uniform way. Religious dogma imparted some of its own fixedness of character to the art which it vouchsafed to employ ; so that, with some slight modification, we might say of Christian art as exhibited in the Catacombs what was said many centuries later during the Iconoclast controversy, that "the making of pictures is not the invention of the artist, but the approved legislation and tradition of the Church ; this tradition does not belong to the artist, only the execution belongs to him, the arrangement and disposition is of the holy Fathers."²

¹ See pages 43-49.

² Conc. Nic. ii., Actio vi., Collect. Labbe, tom. vii. fol. 831, 832.

The truth of these remarks will be more clearly seen when we have examined a few of the principal subjects in detail. Take, for example, the history of Noe. Of what an endless variety of compositions is not this subject capable, and how variously has it not been treated in all the schools of modern art? Yet throughout the whole range of the Roman Catacombs we find but one type of it, and that removed as far as possible from historical truth. Instead of a huge ark riding upon the waves, and containing eight persons, together with a vast multitude of living animals, we have a single individual almost filling the small box in which he stands, whilst a dove, bearing an olive-branch, flies towards him. The occupant of the ark is often a woman or child, instead of a man; and in one instance at least, on a sarcophagus in the Lateran Museum, the name JULIANE is added, *i.e.*, the name of the deceased on whose grave it was figured.



FIG. 24.—Noe in the Ark.

R.S., ii.
Tav. xlviii. 42.

This gives us a clue to the interpretation of the subject, the reason of its selection as a subject of painting; it was derived from Holy Scripture itself. St. Peter, in one of his Epistles,¹ had spoken of a certain resemblance between those eight souls who were "saved by water in the days of Noe, when the ark was a-building," and those Christians who are now "saved by baptism, being of the like form;" and some of the Fathers have drawn out the resemblance in all its details. As the waters of the Deluge cleansed the earth from all its iniquities, so (they say) the waters of Baptism cleanse the soul; so that St. Ambrose even says, that the Deluge was less a punishment for the world than a regenerating baptism for it.² As those only were saved who

The ark a
symbol of
the Church,
the Deluge of
Baptism.

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 20, 21.

² Serm. xxxi. De Rat. Quadrag.

took refuge in the ark, so now also the Lord "adds daily to the Church such as should be saved;" so that St. Cyprian¹ says, "If anybody could escape who was outside the ark, so may he escape who is outside the Church;" and St. Maximus of Turin,² "As the ark of Noe preserved safe amid the general destruction all those who were carried in it, so also the Church of Peter will preserve unhurt in the general conflagration all those whom it contains;" and these will be taken from among "all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues," even as the ark also contained "of every living creature of all flesh, wherein was the breath of life."

We will add the testimony of yet one more witness, but this witness shall be very ancient, Tertullian, who has expressed this doctrine with his usual terseness in the following words:³ "As after the waters of the Deluge, in which the old iniquity was purged away, as after that *Baptism* (so to call it) of the old world, a dove sent out of the ark and returning with an olive-branch, was the herald to announce to the earth peace and the cessation of the wrath of Heaven, so by a similar disposition with reference to matters spiritual, the dove of the Holy Spirit, sent forth from heaven, flies to the earth, *i.e.*, to our flesh, as it comes out of the bath of regeneration after its old sins, and brings to us the peace of God; where the Church is prefigured by the ark."

When, therefore, we find in ancient Christian art this scene of a man or woman inclosed in an ark, and receiving the olive-branch from a dove, we cannot doubt that it was intended to express the same general doctrine, *viz.*, that the faithful, having obtained the remission of their sins through baptism, have received from the Holy Spirit the gift of Divine peace, and are saved in the mystical ark of the Church from the destruction which awaits the world. And if the same scene be rudely

¹ De Unit. Eccles.

² Serm. de Diversis, lxxxix. p. 639.

³ Lib. de Baptismo, vii. See also St. Aug. de Catech. Rudibus, xx.

scratched on a single tomb, as it often was, it denotes the sure faith and hope of the survivors that their deceased friend, having been a faithful member of the Church, had died in the peace of God, and had now entered into his rest. "Nobody doubts," says St. Augustine,¹ "that the Church was typified in the ark of Noe, though this might appear a mere conjecture of man's imagination, had not the Apostle Peter expressly declared it in his Epistle."

Some writers have contended that the way in which this subject is represented in the Catacombs takes its origin from certain famous coins of Apamea, belonging to the reigns of Septimius Severus, Macrinus, and Philip the Elder.² In these coins we see a man and his wife standing in a small chest, with a raven perched behind them, and a dove flying towards them; and however difficult it may be to account for this representation on a heathen coin struck in Phrygia in the beginning of the third century, the letters ΝΩ or ΝΩΕ, which appear on the front of the chest, leave us no choice as to referring it to the history of the patriarch; and, indeed, the town of Apamea assumed a special name—ΚΙΒΩΤΟΣ, or Ark—from its pretensions to be considered the place where the ark had rested.³ There is a painting, however, of the same subject in the Catacomb of Domitilla, for which De Rossi unhesitatingly claims priority in point of time by a century, more or less; and the explanation we have given is abundantly sufficient to account for the Christian form of the painting. The same motive which led to a selection of the subject at all, suggests also the form in which it should be represented.

The next Scriptural subject which finds a place among the decorations of the Catacombs is the sacrifice of Isaac by his father, but of this we have already spoken in the last chapter.

¹ De Unit. Eccl. c. 9.

² Eckhel Doctr. Numm., iii. 132-139.

³ Lenormant, Manuel d'Histoire Ancienne de l'Orient, p. 25.

This subject
not copied
from heathen
coins.

Sacrifice of
Isaac.

Moses striking
the rock,

taking off his
shoes.

We have spoken also of the figure of Moses striking the rock, and shall have occasion to return to it again in a later chapter, with reference to a particular point about it that has not yet been mentioned. It should be added, however, in this place that another incident in the life of Moses is sometimes selected for representation in the Catacombs. He is to be seen in the act of taking off his shoes before approaching the burning bush; and this is treated by some of the Fathers as emblematical of those renunciations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, which all the faithful made in Baptism; or it has been suggested that it might typify that reverence



FIG. 25.—Two scenes in one picture, from San Callisto: Moses taking off his shoes, and Moses striking the rock.

which is required of all who approach the Christian mysteries; or, again, it might be intended to remind them of one of the revelations of Christ before His Incarnation, and of the deliverance He thus wrought for His chosen people, as a type and pledge of the deliverance that was in store for the Christians also.

In one instance, in a fresco in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, we find these two scenes in the life of Moses represented close together, almost as parts of the same picture; but the figure of Moses in the two scenes is manifestly different. In the first, where he takes off his shoes, having been called, by the hand of God coming out of a cloud, to go up into Mount

Sinai to receive the law, he is young and without a beard ; in the second, where he strikes the rock, and the thirsty Jew is drinking, he is older and bearded ; and both the general look of his hair and beard, and the outline of his features, seem to present a certain marked resemblance to the traditional figure of St. Peter.

From Moses we may make a longer step forwards to the prophets, for it is doubtful whether any of the intervening links in Jewish history ever found a place on the walls of subterranean Rome before the days of Constantine. But the histories of Jonas and Daniel are among the most common of all paintings in the Catacombs. They are mentioned, together with Noe and the Good Shepherd, as the figures which Constantine caused to be set up in the public square of his new capital. The reason of the selection it is not difficult to divine.

The history of Jonas had been put forward so emphatically by our Lord,¹ as a type both of His own and of the general resurrection, that it was repeated in every kind of monument connected with the ancient Christian cemeteries ; in the frescoes on the walls, on the bas-reliefs of the sarcophagi, on lamps and medals and glasses, and even on ordinary gravestones. Christian artists, however, by no means confined themselves to that one scene in the life of the prophet, of which we have a divine interpretation, viz., his three days' burial in the belly of the fish, and his deliverance from it, as it were, from the jaws of the grave. The other incident of his life was painted almost, or quite, as commonly, viz., his lying "under the shadow of the booth covered with ivy on the east side of the city," for refreshment and rest ; or again, his misery and discontent as he lay in the same place, when the sun was beating on his head and the ivy had withered away. No Patristic testimony is at hand, showing the particular intent with which this second part of the history of Jonas was so frequently set before the

Jonas and
the fish.
Plate XIX.

Jonas under
the ivy,

¹ St. Matt. xii. 39.

eyes of the faithful : it is easy, however, to see how salutary a lesson of patience and encouragement it could be made to preach to the poor persecuted Christians, whose lot, as witnesses to God's truth, was cast in a city both more populous and more wicked than that to which the prophet had been sent.

The four scenes we have described sometimes occupy the four highest spaces on the wall of a *cubiculum*; sometimes only two are given, opposite to one another; and occasionally even the whole history is crowded together into one compendious scene, the prophet being cast out by the great fish so as to fall immediately under the booth covered with the ivy.

or the gourd. We speak of the *ivy*, because it is so called in the Vulgate; but all scholars are familiar with the dispute in the days of St. Jerome as to the right translation of the Hebrew word used in this place; and know also that all the paintings in the Catacombs correspond with the older translation, and represent a gourd.

Chronological
importance of
this representation.

It is of some interest to note this circumstance, as it accidentally throws important light on the question of the chronology of these paintings. Mr. Parker has said that "the history of Jonah was the fashion chiefly in the fifth century." Yet we have a Roman writer of the earlier half of that century appealing to the representations of the history of Jonas which already existed in the burying-places of the ancients (*in veterum sepulchris*); and these certainly cannot have been the work of yesterday when they were thus appealed to. It is Ruffinus who upbraids St. Jerome for the novelty he has introduced into his translation of the prophet, calling the plant which had grown up in the night for his protection, ivy, or some other plant, instead of the gourd, as it had been rendered in more ancient translations; and he satirically remarks that "now that the world is growing old and everything is hastening onwards to the end," this notable discovery ought to be published even in the old cemeteries, in order that the dead, too, might be dis-

abused of the erroneous opinion under which they had been allowed to live and die, that the prophet had been sheltered by a gourd. This clever bit of irony is easily appreciated by those who are familiar with the continual reproductions of Jonas and the gourd throughout the Catacombs, and who know that these paintings had been executed in the second and third centuries. But the whole passage is without meaning, if the paintings of the prophet's history had been only of recent date.

Indeed, had the paintings been executed in the fifth and sixth centuries, we should never have seen the gourd in them at all, for artists would scarcely have ventured to resist the authority of St. Jerome's translation of the Scriptures. We are confirmed in this view of the case by observing that in the Christian monuments of Gaul, which are all of later date than the original decorations of the Roman Catacombs, this scene is always represented in conformity with St. Jerome's version, whilst contrariwise in the East, where that version was not received, the old traditional gourd still held its ground even as late as the ninth century, as we learn from the miniatures which ornament a Greek Menologium of that date.

Perhaps we might insist also on the form of the fish as teaching the same lesson of chronology. It is altogether unlike any real inhabitant of the deep. The form, however, was not suggested as that of Noe's ark was, by the place which it held in the cycle of Christian doctrine and the truth it was intended to symbolise, but rather by a Pagan model with which the Romans of that day were very familiar. The mythological tale of Andromeda, and the sea-monster to which she was exposed on the coast near Joppa (for so the story ran), was a favourite subject for the decoration of the walls in Roman villas, temples, and other public buildings. It may be seen in Pompeii, and, much nearer to the Catacombs, in Rome itself—*e.g.*, in the barracks of one of the cohorts of the *vigiles* or imperial police, discovered a few

The form of the fish probably taken from the paintings of Andromeda,

and acceptable
for other
reasons.

years ago in Trastevere,¹ and in both places the monster is the precise counterpart of that which is always represented as swallowing or casting up Jonas—a kind of dragon, with large head and ears, sometimes even with horns, a long slender neck, and a very tortuous body. Of course, in the infancy of Christian art, it was convenient to have a model at hand to represent an unknown monster; and, as we have said, we do not doubt that this is the true history of its origin;² still this was not the only reason which recommended the adoption of so grotesque a form. It offered the further advantage of creating as strong a contrast as possible between this “great fish,” which was a type of death, and the other great Fish, which, as we have seen, was the recognised symbol of the Author of life.

Daniel in the
lions’ den, and
the Three
Children in
the fiery
furnace

Daniel in the lions’ den is usually represented in the Catacombs as standing naked³ between two lions, with his arms outstretched in prayer, in the form of a cross. His history admits of a certain elasticity of interpretation. It might have been intended either as a figure of the Resurrection⁴ or as a source of encouragement to the Christian flock under the extraordinary sufferings and dangers to which they were exposed at the command of idolatrous rulers. St. Cyprian, writing in the midst of persecutions,⁵ makes this latter use of the history, and also of the history of the Three Children (as we are wont to call them), who were cast into the fiery

¹ It is represented on the interior of the archway of these barracks, given in our first volume, Fig. 11, p. 137.

² See Tylor’s *Primitive Culture*, vol. i. p. 306.

³ Le Blant (*Inscriptions Chrétiennes de la Gaule*, tom. i. 493) is only able to quote five examples of early Christian art in which Daniel is clothed, and all of these are of much later date than the paintings of the Catacombs. On the use of the nude in ancient Christian paintings, see St. Laurent’s *Guide de l’Art Chrétien*, i. 213. He points out that it was impossible to attach so much importance to it then as we should now, in consequence of the social habits of the time.

⁴ St. Hieron. in *Zach.*, lib. ii. c. ix. 864.

⁵ *Ep.* lxi. or lviii., ed Baluz.

furnace for refusing to worship the golden image set up by Nabuchodonosor. He quotes them as signal instances of the greatness of God's mercies and the power of His protection; these men having acquired the merit of martyrdom through the boldness of their confession, yet being delivered by His might out of the hands of their enemies, and preserved for His greater glory. They had done precisely what the early Christians were called upon to do; they rendered homage to the one true God in the midst of unbelievers, and they were persecuted because they persisted in fulfilling the duty of Divine worship, and refusing to participate in the idolatry by which they were surrounded. And in doing this, they showed forth their faith in God, and a confident expectation of a future resurrection; they stood full of hope and courage, lifting up their hearts and hands towards God, who delivered them out of their trials unhurt. By some of the Fathers, therefore,¹ their histories find a place among the numerous symbols of the resurrection from the dead, "whence also they were received as in a figure"²—*e.g.*, both in the Apostolic Constitutions³ and in the hymns of St. Ephrem⁴ we find the stories of Daniel and of the Three Children united in this connection with that of Jonas. "The body," it is said, "has triumphed over the lions' den, over the fiery furnace, and over the monstrous fish, which was obliged to surrender him whom it had swallowed."

types of the
Resurrection,

Of course, both of these interpretations are legitimate; indeed it is hard to say which was most likely to be continually present to the minds of the original frequenters of the Catacombs. The fact that both of them are to be found in writings of that period, is of itself a sufficient proof that in adopting either we are not arbitrarily imposing a sense of our own upon these paintings, but only seeking to discover by sure rules of interpretation what meaning was really present to

¹ St. Irenæus, lib. v. c. 5, 2: Tertull. de Resurrect.

² Heb. xi. 19.

³ V. 10.

⁴ Hymn 43.

the minds of their authors, and what lessons they conveyed to the minds of those who saw them.

In the writings of later Fathers, such as St. Augustine, St. Chrysostom, and others, the history of the Three Children is used as a type of the history of the Church; at first forbidden by the rulers of this world to worship the true God, and suffering all kinds of persecution because she will not heed the prohibition; then, triumphing over her enemies, and persuading even her very persecutors to become her children and protectors. And there are distinct traces of this interpretation also in the monuments of ancient Christian art. In a few of the later frescoes in the Catacombs, and more frequently in the sculptured sarcophagi of Rome, Nismes, Milan, and other places, the history of the Three Children refusing to adore the image of King Nabuchodonosor is brought into immediate juxtaposition with the history of the three wise men who came from the East to adore the new-born King of the Jews in Bethlehem.

or prophetic
of the history
of the Church.

Bullettino,
1866, 64.

Adoration of
the Magi.

It may possibly be urged by interpreters of the extreme literal school, that this parallelism between the two scenes was suggested by the identity of numbers and similarity of costume; and we do not doubt that this circumstance may have helped to encourage the artists in balancing the one against the other. It is evident, however, that the secret of their connection was something far deeper than this; for in more than one instance we find the two histories actually intertwined, so to speak, and mixed up together. In one painting, the star is placed over the heads of the Three Children, as though they too had been illumined by a special revelation, to keep themselves pure from the Paganism of Roman Babylon, and to adore Christ; and in another, the monogram stands over the heads of the Magi instead of the star. This is a very significant fact, as it demonstrates that not only were the stories of the Old and New Testaments looked upon as symbols and figures of evangelical doctrines, but they were

also treated as prophetic of the facts of ecclesiastical history. The adoration which the infant Saviour received from the Magi was looked upon as a kind of prophecy, or foretaste and first-fruits, of the homage which the whole world should one day give Him; and therefore the sign which had brought conviction to Constantine was represented by anticipation, as though it had been the sign also of the Magi.

This is not the only instance in which two Bible histories are studiously brought together in ancient Christian art. The picture of Noe and the ark is frequently placed very near to the history of Jonas; and, in one instance,¹ the dove which belongs to Noe is represented on the poop of the vessel which is carrying off the prophet, unless indeed we ought to understand the dove in this instance as no longer the dove of Noe, but as representing the Holy Spirit Himself.

Another pair of subjects, which seem, in like manner, to be studiously brought together in monuments of Christian art, are Moses striking the rock, and the resurrection of Lazarus. Sometimes they are found in the same compartment of a painting; sometimes roughly sketched side by side on a gravestone; still more frequently they are together on a sarcophagus. Some antiquarians consider the point of connection between them to be the display of Divine power in bringing living water out of a dry rock, and a dead man to life out of his rocky grave; but this analogy hardly seems to be sufficiently close: any other of the miracles of our Blessed Lord might from this point of view have been selected with almost equal propriety. Others, therefore, look upon these two subjects as intended to represent the beginning and the end of the Christian course; "the fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting," God's grace and the gift of faith being typified by the water flowing from the rock, "which was Christ," and life everlasting by the victory over death and the second life vouchsafed to Lazarus. And this interpretation

Moses striking
the rock, and
the resurrec-
tion of
Lazarus.

¹ Bottari. tav. cxxxi.

seems both more probable in itself, and is more confirmed by ancient authority.

The pictures of the resurrection of Lazarus need no explanation. The historical circumstances of the narrative give it a special prominence in the Gospels; and although the other two miracles of raising from the dead which are recorded offer at least an equally inviting field to the artist, it is remarkable that this alone is ever represented. It is an additional proof that the artists employed in the Catacombs made their appeal to the mind and spirit rather than to the eye, and that they felt they could reckon with confidence upon the enlightenment of the understanding to supply any poverty and insufficiency in the form. Lazarus is generally represented standing swathed in burial clothes, or only partially delivered from them, at the door of his temple-like tomb, and our Blessed Lord touched him with the rod of His power, which calls him back from the dead and gives him a new life. Or He seems to point him out to others after the miracle has been performed, and in this case the rod is transferred to His left hand.

Thus this idea of a new life continues to pursue us as the main source of inspiration to Christian artists. It would have been natural that it should be so after the first preaching of the Gospel, whatever the external circumstances of the Church might have been; but when she was being persecuted, and driven to take refuge in dens and caves of the earth, and when the chief, if not the only, scene of the artist's labours lay amid the tombs of the dead, it could hardly have been otherwise.



BOOK III.

THE PAINTINGS CHRONOLOGICALLY ARRANGED.

CHAPTER I.

THE PAINTINGS OF THE FIRST TWO CENTURIES.

Chronology of the frescoes, how determined—Some of Apostolic or quasi-Apostolic antiquity, e.g., (1) in the Cemetery of Domitilla—The vine, fisherman, Daniel, Noe, banquet of fish and bread; (2) in Crypts of Lucina—Baptism of our Lord, Jonas, fish and bread, the Orante; (3) in Cemetery of Priscilla—Our Blessed Lady, the Holy Family, the Annunciation; (4) in Prætextatus—The Samaritan woman, the Hamorrhœissa, the crowning with thorns—Paintings of second century, in Crypt of St. Januarius—The Seasons, Jonas, Moses striking the rock, the Good Shepherd.

OUR readers are now sufficiently acquainted with the general character of ancient Christian art and the subjects which it principally adopted, to be able to appreciate the attempt we are here about to make to arrange them in chronological order. We have often had occasion to remark that De Rossi's labours in the Catacombs have been specially directed towards a settlement of their chronology, and that the chief means of effecting this has been a diligent examination of the places themselves, and a faithful record of the exact site of everything that has been found. Thus, he notes a *graffito* on the wall of a certain chamber, naming

Chronology of
the galleries
and chambers
in Catacombs
fixed by De
Rossi

the *Natale*, or feast-day, of Calocerus and Parthenius, who were martyred A.D. 304. He finds a tombstone, not yet removed from its original place, bearing the date of 300; four medals, of the years 305 or 306, in one tomb; and a long inscription announcing that a particular chamber was made with the sanction of Pope Marcellinus, who filled the chair of Peter A.D. 296-303. All these chronological tokens, falling within a very limited space of the subterranean excavation, enable him to conclude with certainty that this portion of the cemetery was made in the beginning of the fourth century.

Of course, it is not in every part of the Catacombs that so many and such decisive criteria of their chronology have come to light. They have been more frequent, however, than most persons are aware of; but it would be impossible to collect them in these pages. It is here especially that we must repeat what was said in the beginning of this work, that "to those who wish honestly to examine the evidence for each discovery, nothing will supply the place of a perusal of the original exposition"¹ by De Rossi himself. That we may inspire confidence, however, into the minds of our readers, with reference to the chronological arrangement of paintings which is to be set forth in this Book, we may be allowed to record an incident that is within our own knowledge.

with great
precision.

We have known De Rossi peremptorily contradict the report of a discovery brought to him by one who professed to have been an eye-witness of it, solely on the grounds that such a discovery was inconsistent with what he had already ascertained to be the date of that particular part of the Catacombs. The professed chronology and topography of the alleged discovery did not agree: either the inscription, therefore, was incorrectly copied, or its position in the galleries of the cemetery incorrectly described; and a personal investigation on the spot, the following morning, completely established the justice of his objections.²

¹ Vol. i. p. 50.

² See Note D. in Appendix.

It will assist the general reader to understand the importance Example. of this accurate topographical knowledge, and this habit of minute observation of local peculiarities, if we take a particular example. We will select a painting which has been already set before our readers in Plate XIV. We wish to learn something about its date. To gain this information, an art critic would consider that the most important point would be to discover how far the treatment of the figures and the ornamentation corresponds with that of other paintings, the dates of which are known. Without ignoring the value of such a comparison, we follow De Rossi in adopting a different method.

In the first place, we observe that a red border runs round the *arcosolium* and also the large grave near the ceiling, showing that these sepulchres were constructed before the painting was executed. Now we have seen that the *arcosolium* is not found earlier than the middle of the third century,¹ hence this painting could not have been made before that period.

Again, the small graves which mutilate the figures of Dionysias and Zoe must have been excavated a considerable time after the painting; and De Rossi has established that no burials took place in the Catacombs after the year A.D. 410.

Here, then, without any reference to the style of the painting, are determined certain limits within which its execution must have taken place, viz., between A.D. 257 and A.D. 410. When we come to examine the particular cemetery and chamber in which this fresco is found, we shall discover other indications which will narrow still further these limits; but thus much may suffice to illustrate the sure grounds upon which De Rossi bases his whole chronological system with reference to the various paintings in the Catacombs.

The result of this safe and cautious method has been to prove Christian art to have a far higher antiquity than was

Antiquity of
Christian art.

¹ Vol. i. p. 408.

Bullettino,
1863, 22.

Some paintings of Apostolic or quasi-Apostolic times.

formerly suspected. De Rossi, having satisfied himself that certain monuments in the Cemetery of Callixtus belong to the third century, and having afterwards discovered others which are unmistakably better and older, exclaims that "to rise from certain monuments of the third century to equally certain monuments of the second is a great step towards arriving through darker and more distant ages at the very beginning in the days of the Apostles. One step more, and we shall find ourselves face to face with the hearers of the Apostles themselves; and such monuments," he adds, "undoubtedly exist. Some have still to be sought for; but others are already known, and may be visited on the Via Appia, on its neighbour the Via Ardeatina, and on the Via Salaria."

Bullettino,
1865, 36.

Let us then proceed to visit these cemeteries which he has named, and inquire what paintings are to be seen there. Afterwards, under the same guidance, we will visit other cemeteries, in proper chronological order; and at the end of our circuit we shall find ourselves in possession of a perfect catena of specimens of Christian art during the first four or five centuries; a catena which cannot be broken, because every link is cunningly wrought of many and various strands; each date is determined by the concordant testimony of many different arguments, drawn from art, history, epigraphy, and the comparative analysis of other monuments.

1. In Cemetery of Domitilla.

The Vine

We will make our first visit to the gallery at the entrance of the Cemetery of Domitilla, on the Via Ardeatina. Our readers will not have forgotten the solid reasons which assign this part of the cemetery to the noble family of the Flavii and to the first ages of Christianity.¹ It has also been mentioned that the vault is covered with branches of the vine, with birds picking at the grapes and winged boys gathering them; the branches meandering gracefully and with the perfect freedom of nature over the whole roof, not hampered by any of those geometrical lines and divisions which give such

¹ Vol. i. pp. 120-125.

a character of hardness to the artistic productions of the third and fourth centuries.

The whole of this composition is not unworthy to be compared with the most elegant decorations of tombs of the



FIG. 26.—*Painting on roof of most ancient part of Cemetery of Domitilla.*

Augustan age ; and it is only by virtue of its position, and of the Scriptural subjects which are painted on the adjacent walls, that we claim the credit of it for Christian art. Hardly any critics will be found to dispute its antiquity. Its Christian character, however, is not so universally admitted. But we

symbolical.

must call to mind how distinguished a place among the figures and parables of Holy Writ is held by the vine, and how continually, both in the Old and New Testaments, it represented the people of God. They were "the vine brought out of Egypt and planted by God," the vine treated with such loving care, yet still unfruitful; "that vine which is Israel, and of which Juda is the pleasant fruit;" and in the Gospel it specially represents the Church united to its Divine Head.¹ When, therefore, we note how all the branches of this vine manifestly belong to one stem, springing from the same root, and especially when we see the histories of Noe and Daniel represented close at hand, we cannot doubt its symbolical, *i.e.*, its religious meaning. We do not deem it necessary, however, to insist on finding a Christian meaning in every detail of the work, *e.g.*, in the little winged *putti* which appear among the branches: these were most probably introduced only as innocent artistic ornaments.

The unusual excellence of this painting has contributed greatly to its destruction. It tempted certain persons in the last century to try to detach portions of it from the wall—a process which, whilst inflicting irreparable injury upon those who should come after, can never have yielded anything but a handful of broken plaster and *tufa* to the plunderers themselves. It is still possible to recognise amid the half-ruined decorations traces of small landscapes, such as are to be seen on the walls of some of the houses in Pompeii, but are never found in the Catacombs except in a few most ancient chambers, which were made and decorated at a time when Christian art had hardly created its own compositions.

Fisherman
and Shepherd.

On other parts of the wall may be seen remains of a man fishing, and of a sheep feeding near a tree. This last probably formed a part of the group with which we are so familiar in later compositions, of the Good Shepherd, and which was a

¹ Ps. lxxix. 9–16. Esaias v. 1–7. Jerem. ii. 21. Matt. xxi. 33. Mark xii. 1. Luke xx. 9. John xv. 1–7.

favourite allegorical representation of the faithful at all times. The first, too, was not unfrequently used, and in this simple form seems manifestly derived from the language of Christ when He called Simon and Andrew to the apostolate, saying, "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to be fishers of men." Some writers contend that these subjects ought not to be considered religious subjects at all, and that they might

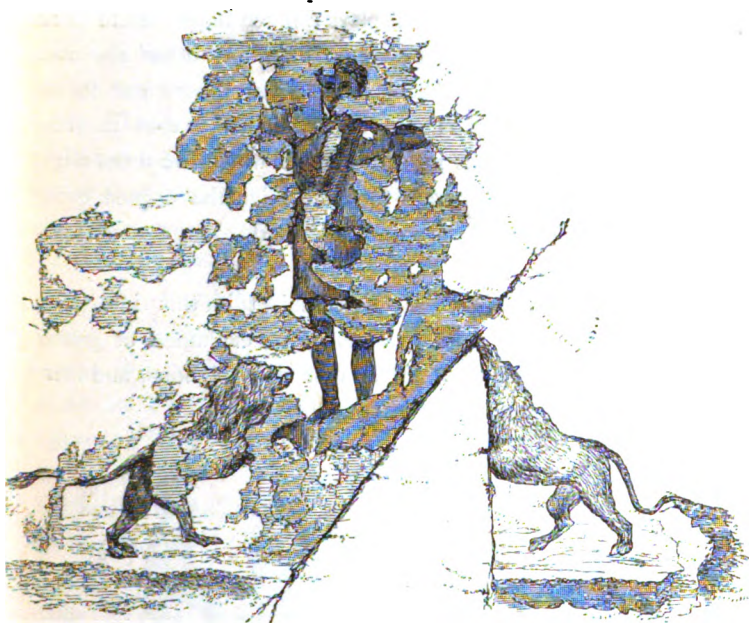


FIG. 27.—*Fragment of Daniel in the Lions' Den, from most ancient part of Cemetery of Domitilla.*

as well be employed in the decoration of a Pagan tomb as of a Christian. In themselves they are of course indifferent, and represent civil rather than religious acts ; but the question is, what was the design of the artist, with what intention they were here represented ; in a literal or in a symbolical sense. And when we observe that Noe in his ark and Daniel in the lions' den form parts of the same series, we are forced to

acknowledge that these also, the shepherd and the fisherman, are to be understood as they appear in the language of the Scriptures rather than as they are seen in real life.

Daniel in
lions' den.

Mommsen says of all the human figures painted in this *cubiculum*, that they are executed in a less perfect way than the vine; but that "they are clearly of the same date as the original excavation." The figure of Noe is too much damaged to allow us to pass any judgment on it; but the figure of Daniel, imperfect as it is, displays a much higher state of art both in conception and execution than any other specimen of the same subject that has yet been discovered in the Catacombs. And it should be remembered that in these compositions there was no earlier model which the artist might take for his guide, whereas the vine might be copied either from nature or from the traditions and examples of more ancient art.

There still remains one more subject in this interesting series of paintings, which requires to be explained at greater length, as its meaning is not at first sight obvious, and there has been no occasion to speak of it before.



FIG. 28.—Two Guests at a Feast, from most ancient part of Cemetery of Domitilla.

Bullettino,
1865, 44.

Two persons (they seem both to be men) are sitting on a couch with a three legged table before them, on which is

served a fish, surrounded by three loaves; and standing opposite to them is another man, who is probably the waiter at the feast, and may be serving the wine; but of this it is impossible to speak with certainty, in consequence of the mutilated condition of the fresco. At first sight the composition of this scene bears a strong resemblance to certain representations on Pagan monuments, which archæologists are wont to call funeral feasts. Yet there are also a few points of difference which it is well to observe.

Two guests
before a table
with fish and
bread.

The earliest specimens of these feasts are to be seen on the upright sepulchral blocks or gravestones of Greece (*στέλαι, αἱπῆι*);¹ but on these, fish is rarely or never found on a tripod; neither is fish found with bread on any Pagan sculptures at all, earlier than the sarcophagi of the Imperial period; and even then only on roughly-executed sarcophagi of the third century, with the composition of which the influence of Christian art may perhaps have had something to do.

Similar scenes
on Pagan
monuments.

But whereas the combination of fish and bread appears rarely, and only at a late period, in the representations of feasts on Pagan monuments, we have learnt that it has a solemn and mysterious significance on the monuments of the early Christians. We have seen it twice in the cemetery of Callixtus, and on a tripod, as it is here; and in each instance there have been certain accessories to the picture, of such a character as to satisfy us that the tripod is meant for the table of the Holy Eucharist, called by St. Paul "the table of the Lord."²

Now, as the painting which we are now examining has manifestly certain *rapports* with those in St. Callixtus, and was executed by men professing the same faith, and designed to ornament chambers intended for the same use, it ought not to be interpreted in a sense altogether independent of that which shines forth so conspicuously in the monuments of

¹ See Letronne's Article in the *Revue Archæologique*, tom. v. p. 355.

² 1 Cor. x. 21. See pages 86, 93, 98.

that cemetery. On the other hand, we may not, without further evidence, assume their absolute identity. As this was one of the most ancient paintings, perhaps it was also the most rude and simple form of expressing an idea which was retained indeed through all subsequent ages, but gradually gathered round it fresh illustrations and received further development, until at length it found a fuller and more adequate expression in the rich and varied representations which meet us in the paintings of a later century.

Three classes of scenes with bread and fish together in the Catacombs.

Bullettino, 1865, 45.

This is the view taken by De Rossi, and we will leave him to expound it in his own words. He says that he distinguishes “on Christian monuments three chief classes of tables or feasts, in which the fish is found together with bread. The first are those feasts which are usually considered to be representations of the *agapæ*, but which I am more disposed to think were meant to stand for the eternal banquet of the blessed in heaven. In these both men and women sit together, and in varying numbers; and this particular selection and combination of only two kinds of food is not uniformly observed. The second are suppers, whereat only seven men are seated, and where the fish and bread are always found together, and generally several basketsful of bread are added.¹ The third is the tripod bearing these things on it, either alone amid baskets of bread, or placed between a priest and an *orante*.²

Scenes of the second and third classes evidently referred to the Holy Eucharist.

“In these last instances, the Eucharistic signification of the scene is at its highest and most perfect degree of development; the secret and mysterious sense of the painting cannot be called in question. In pictures of the second class, the mysterious signification is united with two Gospel facts, the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes, and the feast of the seven disciples on bread and fish on the banks of the Sea of Tiberias, recorded in the last chapter of St. John’s Gospel; but in paintings of the first class, the bread

¹ See Plate XVII.

² See Plate XVI. 3.

and fish are only an accessory, not the principal purpose of the scene, nor yet in any way essential to its symbolical meaning."

Of paintings of the second and third classes we have spoken sufficiently in our chapter on the Liturgical Paintings. We only wish that we could have set before our readers more copious illustrations of them, that so they might be better able to judge of the manifest identity of the subject, combined with a certain variety in the mode of treating it. In four out of the six chambers it is possible to distinguish the details with sufficient exactness to describe them, and faithful copies of them may be seen in De Rossi's second volume.¹ In all these there are only seven persons partaking of the meal, and they are always men. Once the figures are nude, as of men who had just come off from their work as fishermen, which was really the case with the men who took part in the meal provided by our Lord after the miraculous draught of fishes. There are always two or three dishes on the table, but they contain nothing but fish. In front of the table there are standing on the ground seven, eight, or twelve baskets of bread.

Dr. Graves, Protestant Bishop of Limerick, says of these pictures,² "that they are generally supposed either to refer to the miracles wrought by our Lord in feeding the multitudes, or to the incidents recorded by St. John in Chapter xxi. 1-14; and having this primary scope, they may be also regarded as having a reference to the Holy Eucharist." But it seems to us that it would be more correct to say that their reference to the Holy Eucharist is primary, and their representation, either of the miracles or of the supper, only subordinate and indirect. For whereas they give an imperfect and incorrect representation of these facts considered as histories, their symbolical meaning is always adequately expressed.

¹ Plates XIV., XV., XVI.

² Second Appendix to Mr. Parker's volume on the Catacombs, p. 198.

It remains to speak here of the first class of paintings, the so-called *agapæ*, which De Rossi believes rather to have been the heavenly banquet of the blest, "the marriage supper of the Lamb."

The first class not representations of the *agapæ*,

It is difficult to believe that it was intended by these paintings to represent the *agapæ*; for why should the early Christians have cared to give pictorial representations of what they were perfectly familiar with in daily life? Everything else which is found in the Catacombs, either in the paintings, the sculptures, or the sepulchral inscriptions, brought to the minds of those who saw them religious thoughts and feelings. Symbols of the Sacraments, suggestions of the resurrection of the body, and of a future life of never-ending happiness—in other words, the means and the end of a Christian life—were the ordinary subjects which the Christians delighted to paint. There was certainly nothing in the *agapæ* worthy to be compared in this respect with the scenes which have been described in the foregoing chapters. They were feasts of charity, of Apostolic origin; or perhaps we ought rather to say, celebrated in Apostolic times, but probably a continuation of what had been practised in the Jewish Church. They were manifestly very liable to abuse; and we know with certainty that there had been abuse in their celebration even in the days of St. Paul; and at a later period, still graver abuses led to their suppression altogether. We repeat, then, that they do not seem likely to have been an attractive subject to the Christian artist.

but symbolical of the joys of Paradise.

On the other hand, our Blessed Lord had been pleased more than once to speak of the joys of Paradise under the figure of a feast. Not only had He used this language in parables, but also in more plain discourse. He had promised that those whom He should find watching when He came, He would make "sit down to meat, and passing, He would minister unto them;" and again, just after the institution of the Holy Eucharist, He promised His Apostles, that they

should "eat and drink at His table in His kingdom."¹ It was quite natural, therefore, and in entire harmony with the whole genius of Christian art as exhibited in the Catacombs, that a similar figure should be used in painting. And it is in this sense that De Rossi, and most other archæologists of the present day, understand the following scenes from the Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus.



FIG. 29.—A Feast, represented in Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus.—Avinghi, ii. 49.

It is characteristic of Mr. Parker that he should prefer to see in them only "the commemorative feasts which were usual among the ancient Romans on the anniversary of the death of the heads of the family." And he has also imagined that the names of Pomponius Letus, Volscus, Ruffus, Fabianus, Pomponius, and Fabius, Roman Academicians of the sixteenth century,² were parts of the original design, and intended to

¹ St. Luke xii. 37 ; xxii. 30.

² Ruffus appears in Mr. Parker's text (p. 195) as Rufous ; and in his description of Plate XVII. as Puppeus. The reading in our text is the correct one. It is attested by a repetition of it in another place, recording two of his visits to the same subterranean chamber—*Ruffus bis fuit* (De Rossi, R.S., i. 3). Mr. Parker, imagining that Volscus Puppeus and Pomponius Fabius were the names of two old Romans, observes that "these names, under any circumstances, are remarkable."

identify the guests who are seated at the table. The names of Agape and Irene are, of course, allegorical, and intended to signify that peace and charity, which are of the essence of heavenly joys. And the rest of the scene, like the accessories to some representations of the Good Shepherd, is merely taken from the facts of ordinary life. The mixture of water (either hot or cold¹) with the wine is a feature of Roman entertainments, familiar to all classical scholars; and the

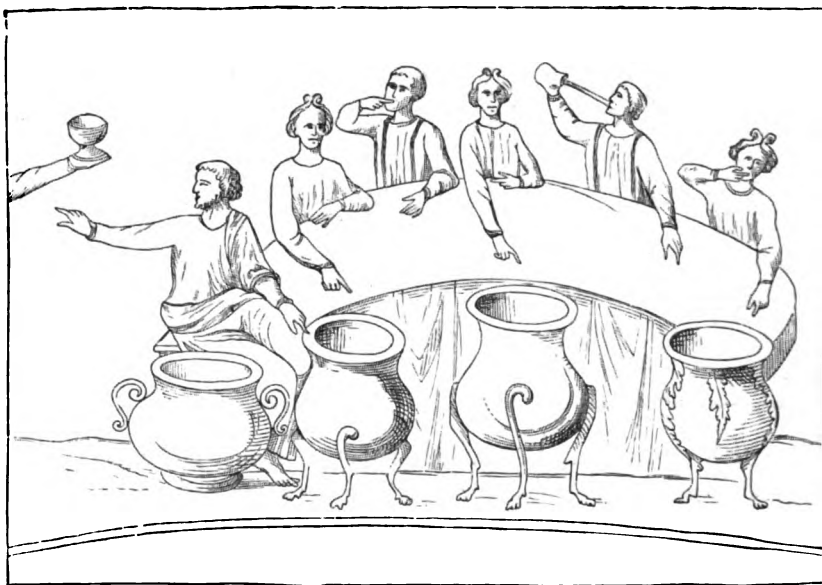


FIG. 30.—A Feast represented in Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus.—Bosio.

form of the words in which the guests are made to ask for this water is the same as we find on Pagan paintings or inscriptions concerning the same subject. Figure 29 is repeated twice in different parts of the same chamber; and there is a slight variation in the inscriptions. *Agape misce mi* in the one example appears as *misce nobis* in the other, and *Irene da*

¹ "Calidæ gelidæque minister," says Juvenal, Satire V. 63.

calda is exchanged for *Irene porge calda*.¹ The cup which appears on the left-hand side of Figure 30 is really in the hands of a waiter, but his portrait is hidden from view by a wall of later construction.

The superior excellence of the paintings in the Catacomb of Domitilla is partly due to their antiquity, partly to the unusually favourable circumstances under which they were executed. For there was more ample space in this gallery than in the low and narrow chambers which were the normal form of excavations in the Catacombs of the next century. Moreover, the high rank of the deceased would have secured the best artists for the work of decorating this tomb. But what gives them their real and highest interest in our eyes is the fact which all careful readers will not have failed to notice, that they set before us in germ the whole cycles, both of Biblical or historical, and even of allegorical subjects, which were afterwards repeated and developed in every kind of monument in later centuries. They are manifestly the original prototypes of the later compositions, which are identical with them as to the choice of subjects, and bear a close resemblance to them also in mode of treatment.

Excellence of these paintings in Cemetery of Domitilla accounted for, and their character pointed out.

Bullettino, 1865, 77

This latter remark must not be limited to the paintings of the Cemetery of Domitilla; it belongs equally to all the others to which De Rossi attributes the same antiquity; and of these we will now proceed to speak. Besides the Catacomb on the Via Ardeatina he appealed to other monuments on the Via Appia, by which a reference was intended to those very ancient crypts now incorporated with the Cemetery of Callixtus, but originally distinct from it, and known as the crypts of Lucina. These are not chambers excavated on opposite sides of the Area I. x. y. same gallery, according to the more common and later form,

2. In crypts of Lucina.

¹ The elision of the final *m* in *calda*, and other similar words, must have been well-nigh universal in conversation before it became so common in inscriptions. Authority for the form *porgere* may be found in classical authors, e.g., Virgil *Æn.*, viii. 274. *Pocula porgit dextris*. Indeed, it is sufficiently common to find a place in ordinary dictionaries.

but the two chambers open one out of the other, and were manifestly intended for private burial-vaults, without any reference to their possible use as places of assembly.

In the outer chamber, most of the paintings on the ceiling, and large portions of the paintings on the walls of both chambers have so entirely perished that we cannot even identify the subjects. Birds, and parts of the figures of men and women are all that can now be distinguished in several places. But over the entrance to the inner chamber is a painting which seems to represent the Baptism of our Blessed Lord; one man

Baptism of
Christ.

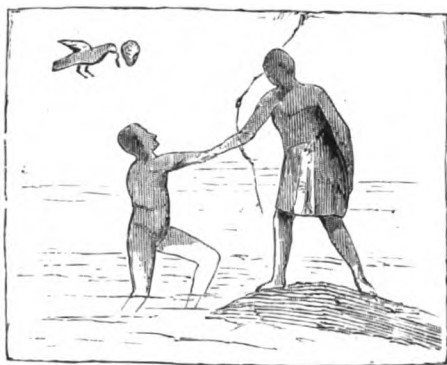


FIG. 31.—A fresco representing the Baptism of our Lord in one of the cubicles in the crypt of Lucina.

is helping another to come up out of the water, whilst a dove floats in the air above Him. On the wall opposite the entrance are those singular representations of a fish, apparently alive and swimming, bearing on its back a basket of bread and a glass of wine, which, on the authority of a letter of St. Jerome, we have identified with the Holy Eucharist. It is true that the painting is of far higher antiquity than the writing of the Doctor; but he is describing a scene which was no longer according to the normal condition of things in the Church, though probably common enough at the time when the painting was made, and revived in later times under circumstances

Holy Euch
arist.

of exceptional poverty, such as those of the Bishop of whom he spoke, who had spent all his substance for the relief of the poor. We are not guilty of any anachronism, therefore, when we explain this painting of the first or second century by the words of a writer of the fifth.

On the opposite wall are one or two other figures of fish, Jonas, or at least of monsters belonging to the deep, suggestive of the history of Jonas, who seems also to be lying unsheltered on the ground in an upper compartment, but without any vestige either of the sea-monster near him, or of the gourd hanging over his head. Thus, this earliest representation of Jonas stands in precisely the same relation to the later developments of this prophet's history, as the two men partaking of bread and fish in the fresco of Domitilla to subsequent symbols of the Holy Eucharist. On either side of the chamber are the two sheep with the milk-pail raised aloft between them, and the two birds, with a tree between them, in a garden, which have been already explained ¹ as emblematical of two souls fed by the Holy Eucharist in this world, and now in enjoyment of everlasting bliss in the next.

The ceiling of this chamber is that of which we have given a representation in Plate XII., of which we have said that the first general impression leaves us doubtful whether it has any Christian emblems at all. On closer inspection, however, we see that Daniel and the lions once filled the central compartment, and that the Good Shepherd and an *orante* are made to correspond to one another in the four corners. We need not here speak of any of these figures except the last. Its position in the ornamentation of this roof and the pedestal on which it stands, cause it at first sight to bear a strong resemblance to some of the female figures so frequently used in Pagan decorations. But the resemblance is only superficial, whilst the points of difference which separate them are fundamental. The dancing women of Pagan art are graceful and attractive to

Orante alternated with Good Shepherd.

¹ See page 553, 54.

the senses, and inspire passion ; the female figures on the walls of the Catacombs speak only to the soul ; they are engaged in prayer, and they invite to prayer.

They stand in what was the ordinary attitude of Christian prayer in those days, stretching out both their hands in a way which represents, as the Fathers did not fail to remark, the form of a cross ;¹ sometimes, but very rarely, they stretch forth one hand only, in which case they bear a resemblance to the Pietas of the Pagans. Figures of these *oranti* (generally of women) are very abundant throughout the Catacombs. When rudely scratched on gravestones, or carved on the front of sarcophagi, or painted on the vaults of *arcosolia*, they are probably intended to represent the person who is buried in the adjacent tomb ; indeed, the names of the deceased are sometimes added,² and where this is the case, they only express pictorially the same consoling truth as is elsewhere set forth more plainly in words—viz., that the deceased are thought of as still living in God, and praying for those whom they have left behind. Elsewhere, however, there seem grave objections to this simple and obvious interpretation ; indeed, in some instances, *e.g.*, in the present, it seems to be quite inadmissible ; and again, where the *orante* occupies a part of a ceiling in which every other compartment is filled by some person or story from the Bible, it is hard to believe that under these circumstances any memorial of a private individual would have been allowed to be introduced.

Then, again, it has been observed by De Rossi and others that a female *orante* is often found as a companion to the Good Shepherd ; and although it is possible that this too may sometimes be intended only for a single member of the flock now

Bullettino,
1866, 47.

Symbolical of
the Church,

¹ Nos non attollimus tantum, sed etiam expandimus, et de Dominicâ Passione modulamur et orantes confitemur.—*Tertull. De Orat.* c. 14. Si statueris hominem manibus expansis, imaginem crucis feceris.—*Ad. Nat.* i. 12. Palmas in morem crucis ad Patrem levandas orantes expandunt manus.—*Prudent: Peristeph.*, vi. 103.

² See Plate XIV.

gathered into the fold, yet there are not wanting, in other instances, indications of a deeper and more general meaning, which Catholic archæologists find either in our Blessed Lady or in the Church. Either might, of course, be very fitly represented by such a figure, and the two interpretations by no means exclude one another. On the contrary, both may very well have been present together to the mind of the artist, for it is certain that the faithful in ancient times recognised a certain resemblance between these two, the Blessed Virgin and the Church. Sedulius, the poet, and St. Ambrose, the Bishop,¹ agree in bearing witness to this ; so does the legend inscribed in Mosaic in the apse of the Lateran Basilica, by Pope Sixtus III., A.D. 432 ; and long before any of these, the famous letter of the Church of Lyons, reciting the triumphs of her martyrs, gives utterance to the same sentiment, when it calls the Church, quite naturally, "the Virgin-Mother,"² as though the phrase would be at once understood by all. But there is yet older and higher authority than this, for the Church was described by St. Paul as the Virgin Bride of Christ, whilst yet she is also the fruitful mother of children. Hence even Protestant authorities have allowed that they are so bound up together in Holy Scripture, that in some places we know not whether it is the one or the other that is spoken of.³ This is specially true of the Apocalyptic vision of the "woman clothed with the sun, and having the moon under her feet, and bringing forth a man-child."⁴ It is impossible to read this without recognising in the mind of the writer a certain "identification," or compenetration of the two ideas. "I do not deny, of course," says Dr. Newman with reference to this vision, "that under the image of the woman the Church is signified ; but what I would maintain is this, that the Holy Apostle

R.S., i. 347.
Bullettino,
1864, 91.

Bullettino,
1867, 84.
R.S., i. 347.

or of the
Blessed
Virgin.

¹ Sedul. V. 356-359. St. Ambr. de Instit. Virg. c. xiv.

² Euseb. H. E., v. i. § 40.

³ Female Characters of Holy Scripture, by Rev. Isaac Williams, p. 327.

⁴ Apoc. xii. 1, 5.

would not have spoken of the Church under this particular image unless there had existed a Blessed Virgin Mary, who was exalted on high, and the object of veneration to all the faithful."¹

Since then, "the Church is one vast body in heaven and on earth, in which every holy creature of God has his place ; and, since "intercession is the first principle of the Church's life, and the vital principle of that intercession, as an availing power, is, according to the will of God, sanctity," what wonder that our Blessed Lady, at once the greatest and holiest of creatures, should have been accepted as a fitting type of the whole Church, and represented with uplifted hands as exercising her intercessory power on behalf of the Church militant? the first-fruits, or herself the personification of the whole assembly of the saints in glory, praying for those who are still contending and running the race of life on this earth.

She is certainly so represented (sometimes alone, sometimes between the Apostles Peter and Paul, or with other Saints) on several of the gilded glasses of the fourth century, of which we shall have to speak hereafter ; as also on a very ancient sepulchral marble in a Church of St. Maximin in Provence. There can be no dispute about it in these instances, as the name itself is written ; and in the monument of Provence a legend, MARIA VIRGO MINISTER DE TEMPULO GEROSALE, referring to her ministrations in the Temple, as recorded in one of the apocryphal Gospels.² Moreover, on Byzantine coins,³ and in works of Greek art generally down to the present day, our Blessed Lady is similarly represented. On the other hand, the same figure remained in use for the Church down to the eleventh or twelfth century ; for, as has been already men-

Bullettino,
1866, 47.

¹ Letter to Dr. Pusey on his Eirenicon, p. 62. See also for what follows, pp. 76, 78.

² Le Blant. *Inscr. Chrst.*, ii. 277. Macarii Hagioglypt. 36.

³ Walsh's *Essays on Ancient Coins*, p. 38.

tioned, a Liturgical MS. of that date in the Barberini Library, contains amongst its illustrations an *orante*, with the legend ECCLESIA.

Tradition, then, both ancient and long-continued, and preserved both in literature and art, allows us in a certain sense to identify the Church and our Blessed Lady; and we are not departing from antiquity, nor indulging in imagination and imposing arbitrary interpretations of our own, when we say that an *orante*, placed in manifest *rapport* with the Good Shepherd, or (as sometimes happens) even substituted for



FIG. 32.—Gravestone from the Cemetery of San Callisto in which the Orante seems substituted for the Good Shepherd.

Him,¹ sometimes means the Holy Church, the Mother of us all, sometimes our Blessed Lady, the Queen of Saints. Sometimes she is the new Eve, as the Shepherd is the new Adam; or she is the Virgin and the Spouse *par excellence*, the spotless Virgin and the Spouse of Christ, the Church personified; or she is some one Christian virgin in particular, or merely a Christian soul generally. And these different significations, all equally applicable, will be preferred at various times,

¹ See Epitaphs on the Catacombs, pp. 158, 159.

according to the point of view from which the *orante* is contemplated—a point of view sometimes determined by the very nature of the representation, but sometimes also left so indeterminate that the devout mind can choose either the one or the other, or even unite them all.

Elsewhere in the Catacombs we find our Blessed Lady represented in another way, natural or historical rather than symbolical. Of course this is the case in all the numerous paintings of the adoration of the Magi, where she sits with the Holy Child on her knee, receiving their offerings. But none of these, so far as we know, belong to the very earliest period of Christian art, of which alone we desire to speak in the present chapter.

3. In Cemetery of Priscilla.

The Blessed Virgin and Holy Child.

Bullettino, 1865, 23.

There is another painting, however, of the Holy Mother and the Divine Infant, with different accessories, in the Cemetery of Priscilla, of which De Rossi says that it is either coeval with the first origin of Christian art, or but little removed from it. It is either of the age of the Flavii and of the preaching of the Apostles, or of that immediately following, *i.e.*, of Trajan or Hadrian, or, at the very latest, of the first Antonines.

The tomb of which it forms an ornament is of the kind which we have called a table-tomb; *i.e.*, it is one of those square-headed tombs which were afterwards superseded by the *arcosolia*. On the roof (so to call it) of this tomb there was figured in fine stucco the Good Shepherd between two sheep, and some other subject now nearly effaced. De Rossi, however, arguing from comparison with other monuments, conjectures it to have been the figure of an *orante* between two trees.¹ The trunk, fruit, and leaves of the tree may still be traced, first moulded in stucco and afterwards painted. But the picture with which we are more particularly concerned covers one end of the vaulted roof, so that it stands horizontally, and not perpendicularly, before the spectator, and might almost be overlooked, if attention were not called to it. It

¹ *Imagines Selectæ B. M. Virginis*, p. 9.

consists of a woman holding an infant at her breast, and a young and almost beardless man standing opposite to them, Plate XX. 1. whilst a star appears high in the air between them. The woman wears a tunic with short sleeves, and a cloak over the tunic, and has her head partially covered by a short light veil. The man is clothed in the *pallium* only, holds a volume in one hand, and with the other points to the star.

Nobody doubts that the woman and child are the Blessed Virgin and the Infant Jesus; but there is not the same unanimity in identifying the other figure. It is very common for the star to accompany our Blessed Lady in ancient Chris-

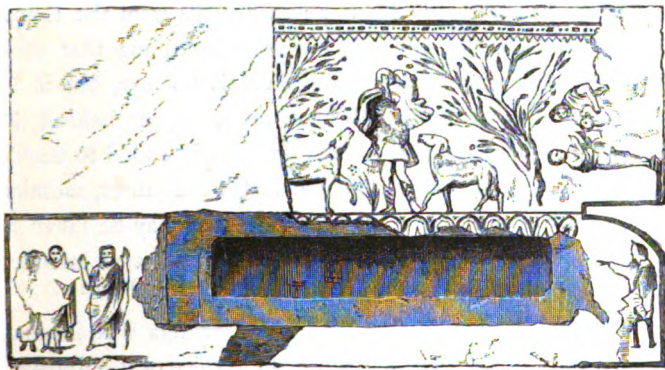


FIG. 33.—*The Arcosolium and its roof in Cemetery of Priscilla, having representations of our B. Lady and the Child Jesus, and perhaps of the Holy Family.*

tian paintings and sculptures, where there is an historical excuse for it, *e.g.*, when she is represented with the Magi offering their gifts, or kneeling by the side of the manger with the ox and the ass; but with a single figure, as in the present instance, it is not so usual. Hence the difference of opinion among archæologists as to the interpretation that ought to be given of this figure. The most obvious conjecture perhaps would be, that it was meant for St. Joseph, except that no ancient monument ever represented him with a volume in his hand. De Rossi gives other reasons also, why we should rather understand by this figure some teacher or prophet (to The Prophet
Isaias.

whom, of course, the *pallium* would be specially appropriate), and he names Isaias, whose prophecies concerning the Messias abound with imagery borrowed from light.¹ Moreover, this prophet is found on one of the glasses in the Catacombs, standing in a similar attitude before our Blessed Lord, where his identity can hardly be disputed, since he appears in another part of the same glass in the act of being sawn asunder by the Jews² (in accordance with the tradition mentioned by St. Jerome);³ and our Blessed Lady, as an *orante*, occupies the intervening compartment between these two figures of the prophet.

Bosio⁴ has preserved to us another fresco from the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, still more closely resembling that upon which we are commenting; only there is no star, but in its stead the battlements, as of some town, appear behind the woman and child, by which it was probably intended to denote the town of Bethlehem, as we see in the sculptures, mosaics, and other works of later art; and this, too, may be taken as a confirmation of De Rossi's conjecture that it is intended here to represent the prophet.

Antiquity of
this painting.

We have already said that De Rossi considers this painting to have been executed at a time when the voice of the Apostles, or at least its echo, still resounded in the Church. He thinks it certain that it was executed within the first hundred and fifty years of the Christian era. He bids us carefully study the art displayed in the design and execution of the painting, and then to compare it with the decorations of the famous Pagan tombs discovered on the Via Latina in 1858, and which are unanimously referred to the times of the Antonines, or with the paintings of the *cubicula* near the Papal crypt in San Callisto, described in a former chapter,⁵ and known to belong to an early part of the third century; and he argues

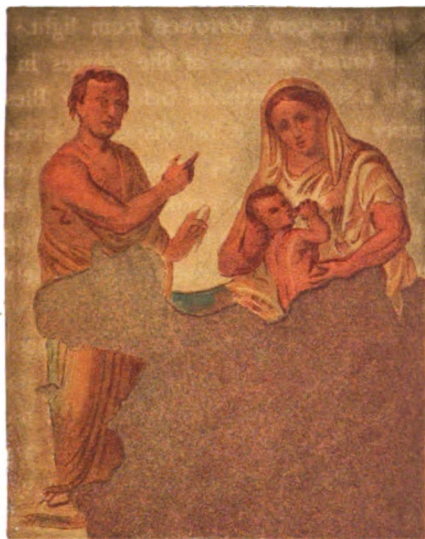
¹ Isa. ix. 2; lx. 2, 3, 19; St. Luke i. 78, 79.

² See Garrucci, Vetri, &c., p. 280.

³ In Isaiam, xv. c. 7.

⁴ Rom. Sott. p. 255.

⁵ Page 86, &c.



that the more classical style of the painting now under examination obliges us to assign it to a still earlier date. Indeed, the style of art exhibited here is of so superior a character that some critics have not hesitated to say,¹ that it might be attributed without offence even to Correggio; and another remarks of the face of the Child, that it is the only one in the whole range of the Catacombs in presence of which he would dare to pronounce the word "beautiful."²

De Rossi next proves that the Catacomb in which it is found was one of the oldest, Priscilla, from whom it receives its name, being the mother of Pudens, and a contemporary of the Apostles; and still further, that there is good reason for believing with Bosio and others that the tombs of SS. Pudentiana and Praxedes, and therefore, probably, of their father, St. Pudens himself, were in the immediate neighbourhood of the gallery in which this Madonna is found; finally, that the inscriptions which are found there form a class by themselves,³ bearing manifest tokens of the same high antiquity. Everything, therefore, combines to satisfy him that this is the most ancient painting of our Blessed Lady which has yet been discovered; and the reader will have observed that, if our conjectures as to the precise locality be accepted, it would have been executed under the same exceptionally favourable circumstances as the other most ancient paintings at the sepulchre of the Flavii.

At either end of the same grave, the roof of which is ornamented by the figures we have been discussing, are other figures which seem to belong to the same class.⁴ They are at present in a very damaged condition; but enough remains to show that here also at one end there was a man in the attitude of pointing at something, and this something, represented at the other end of the grave, proves to be a man and

Representations of the Holy Family

¹ Journal des Savants, 1866, p. 96.

² Richemont, p. 350.

³ See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, pp. 32, 33.

⁴ See the figures at either end of the lower half of Fig. 33.

woman in the attitude of prayer, and a child of whose attitude it is impossible to judge. Can this have been intended for "the Holy Family"? Bosio,¹ Bottari, and others interpreted a similar scene from the Catacomb of St. Callixtus, as purely domestic, signifying that a father, mother, and child lay buried there. Garrucci, however, inclined to the opposite opinion,² and so does De Rossi, though he considers that this class of monuments is open to some question, nearly all the ancient frescoes in which St. Joseph is supposed to appear being in a very bad state of preservation. De Rossi also tells us—and this time he is able to quote both Bosio and Garrucci as of the same opinion with himself—that there are other frescoes in the same Cemetery of Priscilla representing the Annunciation by the Archangel,³ the Adoration by the Magi,⁴ and the Finding of our Blessed Lord in the Temple; in a word, all these archæologists are agreed that this cemetery surpasses every other, both for the number, the variety, and the antiquity of pictorial representations of our Blessed Lady.

and the An-
nunciation.

Modes of
representing
St. Joseph.

St. Joseph certainly appears in some of the sarcophagi; and in the most ancient of them as a young and beardless man, generally clad in a tunic. In the mosaics of St. Mary Major's which are of the fifth century, and in which he appears four or five times, he is shown of mature age, if not old; and from that time forward this became the more common mode of representing him. Probably the later artists followed the legend of St. Joseph's age and widowhood which occurs in the Apocryphal Gospels, especially that which bears the name of St. James the Less, and those on the birth of Mary, and the Infancy of the Saviour. These legends had been quoted by Ephiphanius, St. Gregory Nazianzen, and other writers of the fourth century; and allusions to them, or even

¹ Bosio, p. 549. Bottari, iii. 151.

² Macarius, *Hagioglypta*, pp. 174, 242.

³ Bosio, *Rom. Sott.* 549. Garrucci, *Storia dell' arte Cristiana*, Tav : 75.

⁴ *Hagioglypta*, p. 245.

whole scenes taken from them, occur in the artistic monuments of the fifth and succeeding centuries. Before that time, Christian artists seem strictly to have been kept within the limits of the canonical books of Holy Scripture. Afterwards it was probably considered that there was no longer any danger to the integrity of the faith, and greater licence was given both to poets and artists.

All the paintings that have hitherto been described, De Rossi and other competent judges attribute to the first century, or the first half of the second; for it is not pretended with reference to this chronological arrangement of the paintings in the Catacombs that we have arrived at mathematical accuracy. De Rossi gives the dates we have named only as the closest approximation to the truth that can be made, not as the very truth itself, which cannot now be ascertained. What he insists upon as absolutely certain is the relative chronology of the different frescoes which he examines, that such an one is unquestionably prior in point of time to such another, but he would allow a margin of a quarter of a century perhaps, more or less, to most of the dates he may assign to them. Thus, he hesitates between the end of the first century and the beginning of the second, as the date of certain landscapes and other figures which decorate a chamber at the foot of the principal staircase in the Cemetery of Domitilla, and which he compares to the decorations of the houses at Pompeii; as also of a much more remarkable series of paintings in a chamber of the Catacomb of Prætextatus. He inclines, however, towards the later date.

In our volume on the History of the Catacombs, our chief specimen of the second century was the Catacomb of Prætextatus, which contained amongst others the tombs of St. Quirinus, who suffered A.D. 130, and of St. Januarius, one of the seven sons of St. Felicitas, A.D. 162.¹ The remarkable series of paintings to which we now allude decorate a chamber

4. In Cemetery of Prætextatus, near the tomb of St. Quirinus.

¹ See vol. i. p. 132.

in the immediate neighbourhood of what is believed to be the burial-place of the more ancient martyr. Unfortunately, we are unable to set before our readers a perfectly trustworthy copy of them. They were first discovered in 1850, and Father Marchi caused copies of them to be at once taken, and exposed in the Christian Museum at the Lateran, where their importance, as among the earliest monuments of Gospel history, was immediately recognised. M. Perret also took copies of the originals, which may be seen in his great work,¹ published at the expense of the French Government; and they have appeared also in the "History of Christian Art," by Garrucci,² who had access to the drawings made for Father Marchi. It is to the last-named work that we are indebted for our own sketch; but we should have greatly preferred the more accurate copies that are in course of preparation for De Rossi. Unfortunately, the publication of these is delayed, because they are not quite complete, and he is no longer able to gain access to the originals. The owner of the field under which this Catacomb lies has persisted, for the last eight or ten years, in refusing admission to any representative of the Commission of Sacred Archæology; and although the courts of law have twice declared his resistance to be illegal, it has not been possible, or at least it has not been deemed prudent, to attempt to enforce their decision.

We have thought it necessary to enter into these particulars, because it has been made a matter of complaint, both against De Rossi and ourselves, that we have not published the paintings in question. Mr. Parker, with the connivance of the landlord, but without the consent of those to whom the guardianship of these subterranean treasures legally, as well as morally, belongs, was enabled to descend into the cemetery, and to introduce his artist. From some cause or other, however, he did not use the magnesian light with which he had been wont to work in the Catacombs, and therefore did not

¹ Tom. i., Plates LXXX.-LXXXII.

² Tom. i., tav. xxxviii., xxxix.

take photographs, but made drawings only, which are most imperfect. He was struck with the good drawing of the figures, which he rightly recognised as a token of antiquity ; but then, misled by his fundamental error as to the Catacombs having been used as burial-places by Christians and Pagans indifferently, and having nobody at hand to call his attention to the presence of the Good Shepherd in the centre of the roof, and to the undoubtedly Christian gravestones still remaining *in situ* in the lower part of the walls, he imagined the paintings to be Pagan, though without being able to suggest any Pagan subjects which they could represent.



FIG. 34.—*Our Lord with the Woman of Samaria at the Well.*

In our drawings of them, nobody will fail to recognise the figures of the Samaritan woman at the well, and of that other woman who touched the hem of our Lord's garment and was healed. In Mr. Parker's drawings¹ there is no appearance of the well between the figures of the man and the woman in the first scene, and only a very indistinct shadowy outline, where there should have been the Hæmorrhœssa, behind the principal figures in the second. In the third scene² he has omitted

The woman
of Samaria at
the well.
The Hæmorrhœ-
hoissa.

¹ Plate XIV. of his volume on the Catacombs.

² Plate XIII. of Mr. Parker.

the reed, which is certainly present in the extended hands of the man who stands in the middle. With this adjunct, we



FIG. 35.—*The Hemorrhoid touching the hem of our Lord's garment.*

think everybody would say that we have here a pictorial representation of the words of the Evangelist, "They struck His head with thorns." The crowning with thorns.



FIG. 36.—*Striking our Lord's Head with a Reed.*

Bullettino,
1872, 64.

head with a reed ;"¹ and this interpretation is unhesitatingly given by De Rossi and others who have studied the originals.

¹ St. Mark xv. 19.

Father Garrucci, however, doubts about the form of a crown round the head of the principal personage (where Mr. Parker's artist seems to have recognised it), and he objects to the presence of the dove¹ at this particular incident of the Passion. He therefore interprets the whole scene as representing the Baptism of Christ. He considers that the splashes of green paint round the head were intended merely to represent water, as in the paintings of the administration of Baptism in the sacramental chapels of St. Callixtus, and the man standing with a reed or the long leaf of some aquatic plant in his hand, he understands as intended to designate the place—the banks of the Jordan. But this is very unlike the ordinary artistic language of the Catacombs; and, little as we should have expected beforehand to meet with a scene from the Passion of so ancient a date, we accept De Rossi's interpretation as more probable in itself and more agreeable to the original.

Of the Samaritan woman conversing with our Lord at the well, De Rossi has found another representation in the Cemetery of St. Soteris, and, some authors would say, in another *R.S., iii. 8.* older area of the Cemetery of St. Callixtus.² St. Maximus of Turin understands her to be a type of the Gentile Church;³ and it would almost seem from the remarks of Eusebius upon the famous statue of our Blessed Lord, which was set up by the woman who was cured of the issue of blood by touching the hem of His garment, that she too was believed in the tradition of the Church not to have been one of the children of Israel, though there is nothing in Holy Scripture to say so. Perhaps future excavations may show that the scene of the crowning with thorns was not so singular a monument as at present it appears. It is important to observe that it belongs to a period anterior to any interference (so far as we know) with the privacy and inviolable security of the Christian ceme-

¹ Mr. Parker's drawing gives no sign of the dove.

² See page 101.

³ Hom : 98.

teries in Rome, so that there is less difficulty in accepting the explanation that is proposed than there would have been, had the painting been of later date.

Somewhat
later paintings
at the tomb of
St. Januarius.

If we pass on from the tomb of St. Quirinus to the chamber in which St. Januarius was buried, within the limits of the same cemetery, we find a change in the character of the ornamentation, exactly corresponding to the later date to which it

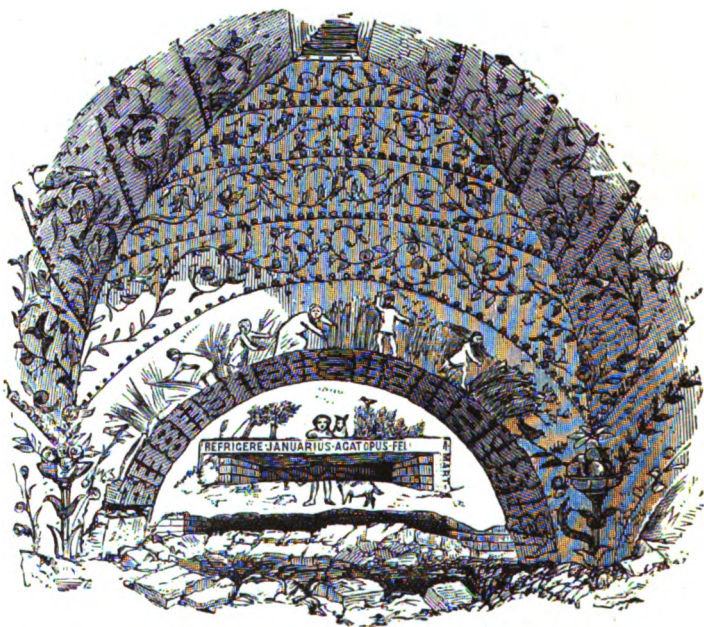


FIG. 37.—Painting of an Arcosolium of the Second Century in *Prætextatus*.

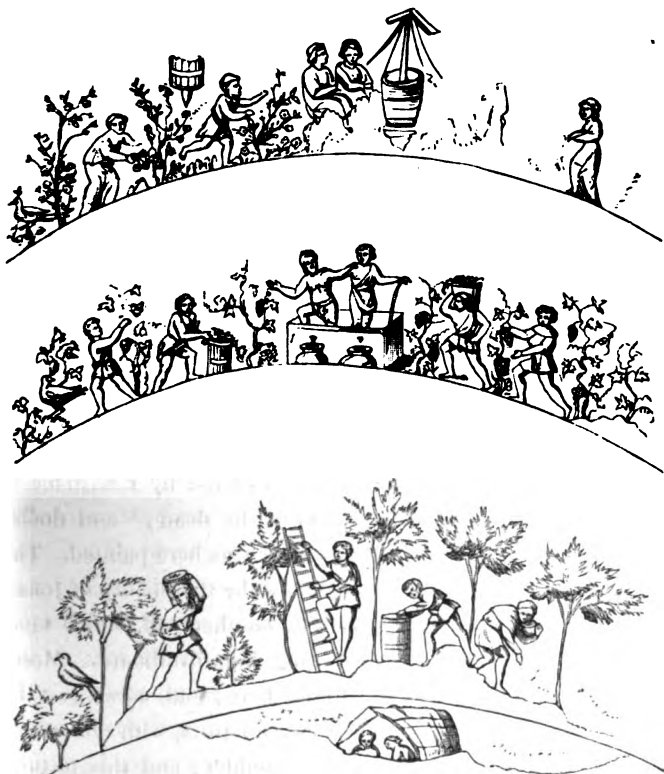
Bullettino, 1363,
3; 1872, 70.

belongs. The walls of the chamber are very richly decorated, and in a style by no means inferior to the best classical productions of the same period, yet certainly not to be compared with the decorations which we have examined in the principal gallery of the Catacomb of Domitilla. A glance at the accompanying sketch of the vaulted roof will suffice to show the difference between them. Its stiff geometrical divisions form a striking contrast to the perfect grace and freedom of the

The vine.

vine trailing over the roof of the sepulchre of the Flavii. Still, it is far from being a bad composition or badly executed, and we have nothing like it in post-Constantinian times.

The whole space is divided into four bands of wreaths, one The seasons.
of roses, another of corn-sheaves, a third of vine-leaves and



FIGS. 38, 39, 40.—Lowest Border of Ornament on three sides of a Chamber in Cemetery of *Prætextatus*, representing three seasons.

grapes (and in all these, birds are introduced visiting their young in nests), and the last or highest, of leaves of laurel or the bay-tree, or (according to Garrucci) of the olive-tree. Of course these represent severally the seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter. The last is a well-known figure or symbol

of death ; and probably the laurel, as the token of victory, was intended to represent the new and Christian idea of the everlasting reward of a blessed immortality. At the four corners are large vases of bright flowers, out of which rise stems, following the ribs of the vault, and entwined with leaves and flowers to which the bands are attached. Below the lowest of the bands succeeds another representation of the seasons, according to the harvest peculiar to each. On one side are children gathering flowers ; but much of this is broken off ; on another, which may be seen in our sketch, grain is being reaped, gathered in, and threshed ; on a third, men and boys are gathering grapes, bringing them in baskets on their shoulders to the wine-press, where a beardless youth and a man are employed in treading them out, and the must is running from two channels into a large vessel prepared to receive it. Finally, on the fourth side, young men are gathering olives, some standing on ladders to pick them from the trees, and others collecting them from off the ground. Tertulian tells us that "the whole revolving order of the seasons" (which is here represented) was considered by Christians to be "a witness of the resurrection of the dead ;" and doubtless it was with this intention that they were here painted. The same lesson was, of course, taught also by the history of Jonas, fragments of which may be seen on another wall of this same chamber, with two sailors throwing him overboard. Moses striking the rock, the Good Shepherd standing between two trees, with one or two sheep at His side and one on His shoulder ; and this picture, executed on the first coat of plaster with which the chapel was covered, was afterwards destroyed for the sake of excavating a grave in the rock behind it.

Jonas,

Moses striking
the rock, the
Good Shepherd,
herd.

Later specimens
of the
vine.

We have seen in this chapter two specimens of the vine used as an ornament in ancient Christian art ; and it may interest our readers to see yet two other specimens of the same subject, belonging to later dates. They serve to show on the one

CHAPTER II.

PAINTINGS OF THE THIRD CENTURY.

*Development of Christian Art—Combination of subjects and composition—
Examples: Fisherman—Jonas and the ship—The rock—The Orante,
individualised and named—Examples—Family groups—Scenes from
civil life—Masks and other ornaments of Pagan art—Biblical subjects
still retained—Three Children in fiery furnace—Daniel in the lions'
den—Susanna and the Elders—Scene from the trial of a martyr.*

WE have seen that before the end of the second century Christian art not only represented the dogmas of the faith under the veils of emblems and symbols, such as the anchor, the fish, the lamb, the dove, the vine, the fisherman, and the Good Shepherd, but also boldly produced persons and scenes from Bible history, such as Noe, Moses, Daniel, and Jonas from the Old Testament, and three or four others from the New. These all, however, were treated at first with the utmost simplicity. Each subject stands alone, as it were. The principal figure is engaged in a single action; the fisherman is fishing, or the shepherd is carrying a sheep; but there are few, if any, accessories to the picture; and it is not clear that there was always an attempt at combination and composition. It was in the nature of things that, as time went on, Christian art should develop.

Development
of Christian
art in third
century.

Such development could not fail to be the fruit of the pious meditation of successive generations of Christians exercised upon the history of their faith and upon the outward representations of its mysteries, to which they had been now so long accustomed. The bud expanded, and the full-blown flower displayed new beauties—beauties which had been there indeed before, but were unseen. Different emblems or

Combination
of subjects
and composi-
tion.

different typical histories were blended together, and the result became more artistic: artistic in the combination of ideas, although Christianity did not remove the causes which rendered it more and more difficult to express those ideas with adequate skill in execution. A more brilliant translation, so to speak, was thus given of the same thoughts and ideas with which we have been familiar in a more elementary form from the beginning. We have seen a singularly perfect specimen of this in "the sacramental chapels,"¹ which may have been executed before the end of the second century; certainly they reflect the character of Christian art as it was in the second century, rather than as it was in the third. In these chapels we

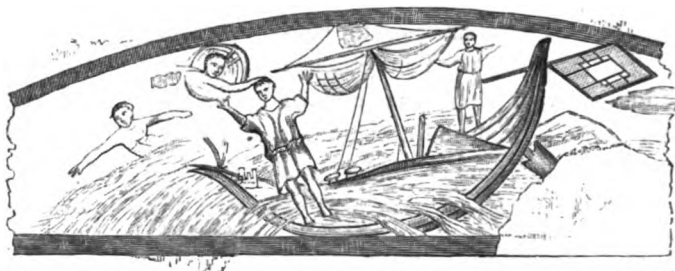


FIG. 43.—*The Ship of Jonas, in one of the Sacramental Chambers.*

Examples
from the
Sacramental
Chambers.

met again the Apostolic fisherman, whom we saw in the most ancient sepulchre of the Flavii; but the river in which he fishes is now a mystical river, formed by the waters which have flowed from the rock struck by Moses, that Rock which is Christ, whence flow the graces of Baptism, the one fountain of faith. The fish and the bread are there also, but not in their naked simplicity, lying on a table, or the one merely placed on the top of the other; but with additions connecting them with some of our Lord's miracles, and with incidents of the Old Law on the one hand, and with the celebration of the holy Liturgy on the other. The ship which appears alone on several of the early tombstones, and which we have seen

The ship of
Jonas a type
of the Church.

¹ See pp. 90-103.

laden with Christian souls, guided by the Holy Spirit, is shown in these same chambers in the midst of a tempest, and a man who is outside the ship is tossed about in the waves in imminent danger of perishing; whilst another man, who is within the ship, stands erect in the attitude of Christian prayer; and the power and goodness of God, typified by a figure coming out of a cloud, lays hold of him by the hair of his head to secure his safety. The corresponding compartment in the next chamber gives us the ship of Jonas, but with the sails and masts so arranged as to reveal to all Christian eyes the form of a cross.¹ The interpretation of these symbols is too obvious to need comment. We will only quote the words of St. Hippolytus: "We who hope in the Son of God are persecuted by unbelievers. . . . The world is a sea, in which the Church, like a ship, is beaten by the waves, but not submerged."² Prayer in the one instance, and the Cross in the other, set before us the grounds of this holy confidence.

Other Bible histories also are made use of, of which we have no earlier specimens, the sacrifice of Isaac, the healing of the paralytic, and the resurrection of Lazarus. And all, as we have seen, are so admirably arranged as to be equivalent to a well-ordered dogmatic discourse, or almost a pictorial catechism, set forth by official authority, describing with great accuracy the rise and progress of the new Christian life; the life of Divine grace, first imparted by baptism, then fed by the Holy Eucharist, and finally exchanged for an everlasting life of glory.

If we pass from this area of the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, the latest portion of which is not later than the beginning of the third century, to others which were not made till the latter half, or quite towards the close, of the same century, we shall observe a marked change in the character of the decorations. Allegorical symbols were almost abandoned, and a decided preference was given, even in the most careful and elaborate

Isaac,
Lazarus, &c.
R.S., ii. 347.

Bullettino, 1865,
4; 1873, 19.

Approach to
literalism
before end of
century.

¹ See Plate XIX. 1.

² De Antichristo c. lix. apud Gallandi Bibl. Pat., tom. ii. p. 438.

The *orante*
individualised.

paintings, to more personal and historical types. Even when the old forms were retained, they generally received certain modifications, tending more or less strongly in this direction. In the figure of the *orante*, for example, instead of the plain white robe, ornamented only by two narrow stripes of purple descending from the neck to the feet, the broad *clavus* is substituted, and certain round purple patches, such as were then commonly worn by way of ornament, and called *calliculæ*, are added to the skirts of the vestment; earrings also, and neck-



FIG. 44.—Two *Oranti* of unusual size, ornamenting a tomb of the Third Century.

laces, and an elaborate form of head-dress, all tending to individualise the figure (so to speak), and to rob it of its more general and symbolical signification. The accompanying specimen, taken from the cemetery that was made in the *arenaria* between the Catacombs of Thraso and of the Jordani, on the Via Salaria, has always attracted considerable attention because of the unusual size of the figures, which gave room for the expression of individual character, had the artist been desirous and capable of depicting it. They have been quite

R.S., ii. 360

Bullettino,
1873, 14.

recently destroyed by workmen engaged in digging the foundations of buildings connected with the villa of the late Victor Emmanuel ; but good copies of them have been preserved in Mr. Parker's photographs. Besides the two principal figures, there is the bust of another woman painted on the space between two of the graves, with birds and festoons of flowers ; and the common Biblical subjects, at the top, of Moses striking the rock, and Jonas cast out of the fish's mouth and reclining under the arbour. If there had been only three graves here, instead of four, we should have conjectured that the artist intended to depict the three ladies who were buried in them ; and perhaps this really was his purpose, and the lowest grave may have been a later addition. De Rossi assigns for their date the latter half of the third century, or the beginning of the fourth : and what enables us to fix the date with certainty is the discovery, in the immediate neighbourhood, of that very curious and valuable inscription to the memory of one Severa, "who died on Friday, the 5th of November, and the 24th day of the moon," A.D. 269.¹

Sometimes the very names are added to the figures of the *orante*, as in the example we have given in Plate XIV., from the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, and which we here reproduce in another form for the convenience of reference. It may be seen in a chamber which is immediately opposite the *cubiculum duplex* of the Deacon Severus, but which was made before it. The *cubiculum* of Severus belongs to one of the years between 296 and 303. Here, too, we are able to fix the date with confidence, because the inscription² states that it was made under the jurisdiction of Pope Marcellinus, and it is impossible that such an elaborate work, and so spacious a *luminare*, should have been executed after the persecution of Diocletian had begun.

The chamber of Dionysas and her companions was somewhat older, as we have said, but probably not very much older.

¹ See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, p. 19.

² Vol. i., pp. 349-351.

Chamber of
"the Five
Saints."



FIG. 45.—*Paintings of Five Saints, with their names, in a Chamber of San Callisto.*

It is a chamber almost square, with its side walls and roof covered with a slight coat of fine white plaster; the end wall, opposite the entrance, is covered with paintings on a coat of plaster somewhat less fine and white. In the right-hand wall there is an *arcosolium*, capable of containing two bodies, and the *arcosolium* at the end contained four, besides which there was another grave of the ordinary kind, but of double size (*bisomus*), made above the arch of the recess. This was not, *R.S.*, iii. 52-57. like the smaller graves on either side, a later addition—but must have been contemporaneous with the paintings, for the paintings come between the *arcosolium* and the *bisomus*, following the lines of both.¹ They represent five persons—two men and three women—Dionysas, Nemesius, Procopius, Eliodora, and Zoe, standing in the midst of a garden full of flowers and trees laden with fruit, among which a number of birds of various kinds, but all of gay plumage, are enjoying themselves.

De Rossi says of this painting, that it is by far the brightest picture of paradise that he has seen in the Catacombs; and that the words IN PACE which follow each name, taken in connection with the beauty of the surrounding scene, and the attitude of prayer in which all the figures are standing, is a faithful pictorial rendering of the two ideas which are so frequently found in combination on written epitaphs, and of which he gives the following examples. Some of them have never before been published :—

ZHCHC EN KQ KAI EPOTA THIEP HMON.

VIVAS IN PACE ET PETE PRO NOBIS.

CHRISTUS SPIRITUM (TUUM) IN PACE ET PETE PRO NOBIS.

BENE REFRIGERA ET ROGA PRO NOS.

SPIRITUS TUUS BENE REQUIESCAT IN DEO PETAS PRO SORORE
TUA.

VINCENTIA IN  PETAS PRO PHÆBE ET PRO VIRGINIO EJUS.

VIVAS IN DEO ET RO[GA].

SPIRITUS TUUS IN BONO ORA PRO PARENTIBUS TUIS.

¹ See page 119.

Dogmatic
teaching of
the painting.

R.S., iii. 53.

and lastly, in the most complete form,

IN ORATIONI[BU]S TUIS ROGES PRO NOBIS QUIA SCIMUS TE

IN ✠

Mayest thou live in the Lord, and pray for us.

Mayest thou live in peace, and pray for us.

May Christ [refresh, or receive thy] spirit in peace, and pray for us.

Be well refreshed, and pray for us.

May thy spirit rest well in God ; pray for thy sister.

Vincentia in Christ ; pray for Phoebe and her husband.

Live in God, and pray [for us].

Thy spirit [is] in good [*i.e.*, happiness, or God] ; pray for thy parents.

Ask for us in thy prayers, because we know that thou art in Christ.¹

But to return to the painting before us. We see on a lower part of the wall what nobody before De Rossi had ever detected, a sixth name added, *ARCADIA IN PACE*, but without any female figure. The words are written close to the head of a peacock, the well-known emblem of immortality ; and perhaps this bird may have been intended to stand for the person, as we find elsewhere the names of individuals written over the heads of doves. And on a still lower part of the wall, outside the graves, are other birds, standing on the edges of vases full of water, at which they are refreshing themselves. This is a figure of the joys of Paradise, which we have met with before, and we may add to the illustrations of it which we then gave, the vision of St. Perpetua in prison, recorded by herself, in which she tells us she was assured of the release of her brother Dinocrates from all penal suffering and his entrance into everlasting happiness, as soon as she saw him drinking freely from the waters of a delicious fountain in the heavenly garden.²

Conjecture as to the persons here represented.

The addition of Arcadia to the five whose names had always been read on the painting, makes up the full number of persons that might have been buried in the two *arcosolia*, or in the

¹ Some of these will be found at greater length in the Epitaphs of the Catacombs, pp. 93, 94.

² Acta S. Perpetuæ apud Ruinart, § viii. ; see also p. 55.

principal *arcosolium* and the *bisomus*. It is very probable that all these persons, or at least the five of them, were martyrs. This is suggested partly by the nature of the composition itself; partly also, by the fact that the paintings were cut through at a later period to admit of other graves,¹ for which room might easily have been found in other parts of the chamber. If we may draw a conclusion from the costume depicted by the artist, we should conjecture also that there was a considerable difference in the social position of the male and female members of this group. The dresses of the men are as plain and simple as possible, whereas the ladies are richly clad in purple and gold, with pearls in their head-dress and other ornaments, betokening a wealthy and distinguished rank. The use of purple dalmatics, such as these ladies wear, was at first reserved to members of the Imperial family; but at the time to which these pictures belong, it had been extended to all matrons by a decree of Aurelian, A.D. 270-275.

Is it quite accidental, or is it an "undesigned coincidence," that the name of Zoe should occur in certain Acts of martyrdom belonging to the very same date, and under circumstances which might precisely account for the apparent difference of rank which we have noticed? This is a question we shall not attempt to answer; but at any rate we cannot withhold from our readers the circumstance mentioned by De Rossi, that in the Acts of St. Sebastian we read of a lady named Zoe, wife of an officer of the Imperial court, who is said to have been converted to Christianity, and to have suffered martyrdom about the year 287. She was drowned in the Tiber, and those who were detected in an attempt to recover her body also received the crown of martyrdom. Of course we are well aware that the Acts of St. Sebastian have not reached us in their original authentic form; but our readers have long since learnt that even spurious Acts (as they are called) often preserve to us the memory of true events which would otherwise have perished.²

Were they
martyrs con-
temporaneous
with St.
Sebastian?

¹ See Part I. pp. 171, 172.
VOL. II.

² See Part I. pp. 23, 322, 461.
L

A family group represented.

At no great distance from the chamber of Dionysas and her companions there is another painting, which almost looks as if it had been executed by the same hand. This, too, consists of five persons; but their names are not given. From the

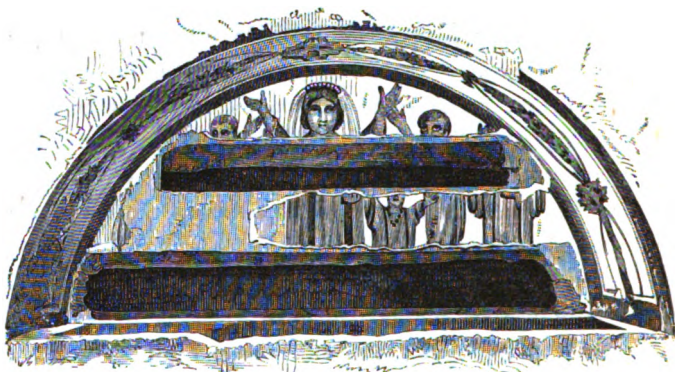


FIG. 46.—A Family Group (apparent *y*) painted on a tomb in Cemetery of St. Soteris.

different sizes, however, of the figures, there seems clearly to have been an intention to identify the persons; it suggests the idea that they were all members of the one family. There is not the same rich variety of birds, fruits, and flowers around

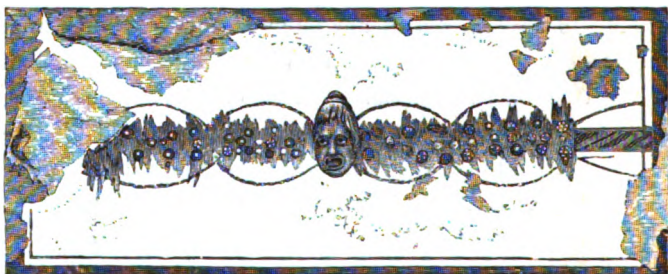


FIG. 47.—Ornamentation of the same Tomb.

them; there is nothing to suggest that they were martyrs. There is only a narrow band or garland of flowers, running under the arch of the *arcosolium*, with a mask in the centre just over the head of the principal figure. This mask reminds

us rather of the ornamentation of Pagan art than of Christian ; ^{Pagan ornaments.} and so does another painting in the same neighbourhood, and probably of about the same date, consisting of ducks and ^{R.S., iii. 82.} goats lying on the ground, with the *thyrsus* across their backs. Our readers have seen a copy of it in Plate XIII. ; and they might almost have suspected it of being the work of a Pagan hand, if the central compartment had not been occupied by a woman in the attitude of Christian prayer. The rest of the tomb is covered, not with subjects taken from the Bible, but with loose garlands of flowers.

The same might be said also of the half-naked recumbent *The Seasons*.



FIG. 48.—*An Emblem of Spring.*



FIG. 49.—*An Emblem of Summer.*

figures, which fill two sides of the ceiling of another chamber in St. Callixtus', belonging to the middle of the third century. The plaster has fallen away from the two corresponding com- ^{R.S., ii. 208.}partments ; but it is probable that they were of a similar kind, and that together they were intended to represent the seasons. The woman seems to hold in her hand the cup of some white

flower, and was probably meant to denote spring, whilst the man, carrying a basin full of fruits, may be supposed to indicate the heats of summer.

R.S., ii. 357.

De Rossi observes that the specimens of Christian art brought to light in that part of the Cemetery of St. Callixtus which we are now considering, manifest a greater tendency to multiply and to give prominence to natural symbolism of this kind than the decorations of any of the earlier *areae*; and that he has noticed the same thing in other cemeteries belonging to the same period. The truth of this remark will commend itself to all who have studied with attention the forms of ornamentation which prevail throughout this area of St. Eusebius, as it is called; *i.e.*, the area in which the epitaph of that Pontiff has been found, and the excavation of which was certainly begun in the latter half of the third century. For the most part they are festoons of flowers, or branches of the vine with bunches of grapes or with birds, not executed with the same freedom as in earlier days, yet still not devoid of a certain amount of prettiness.

We select as our first example the following not ungraceful

Disguised
representation
of the Cross.
Area IX. 34.



FIG. 50.—Ornament of an Arcosolium in Area IX. of St. Callixtus.

ornamentation of the arch over an arcossolium, at the back of which is a very interesting representation of a cross, cleverly disguised, as though the form had merely resulted from the accidental crossing of two branches of the shrubs growing in the garden. On either side of the cross is a bird, reminding us of the more ancient figure we have seen of two Christian souls, as fish at the sides of the cross-shaped anchor, and still more closely anticipating the scene which is of such frequent

recurrence in later mosaics and sculptures, the cross or the sacred monogram between two birds or sheep; all alike symbolising Christian souls clustering round the centre of their faith and hope and love.

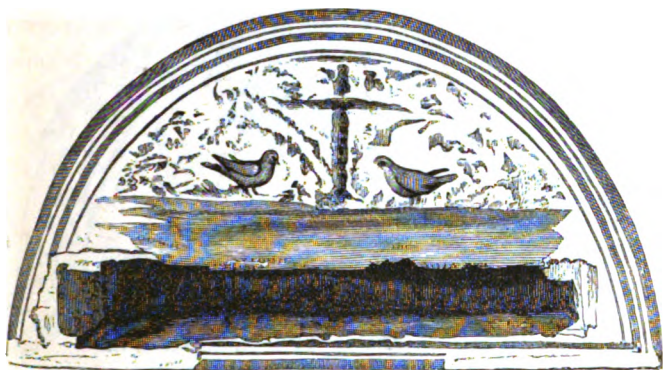


FIG. 51.—Disguised representation of the Cross at back of the same Arcosolium.

Another of the festoons to which we refer runs over the arch of an *arcosolium*, the back of which is occupied by a scene most rare in the ancient Christian cemeteries—a scene of ordinary civil life; indeed, De Rossi calls this painting quite

Scenes from civil life represented.



R.S., iii. 79.
Area X. 42.

FIG. 52.—Ornament of an Arcosolium in Area X. of St. Callistus.

unique in the Catacombs. A woman stands between stools or tables that are covered with vegetables, and a basket full of the same is on the ground. We can only conclude that the sale of these had been her humble occupation during life, and

that her surviving relatives took this mode of recording it, instead of the more ordinary mode of inscribing it on the

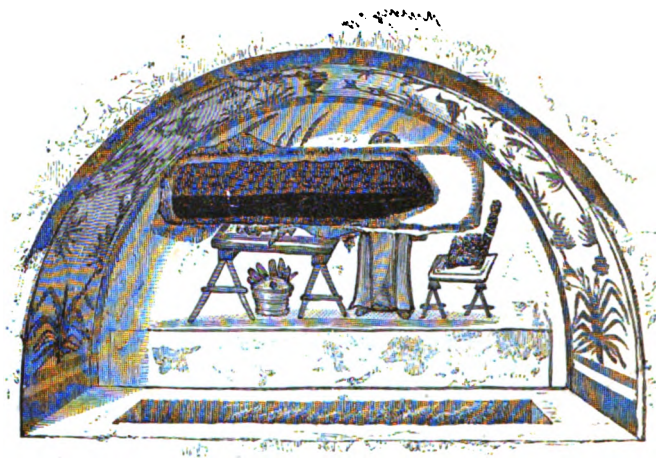


FIG. 53.—*Painting on the tomb of a seller of vegetables.*

epitaph, as the friends of another woman did on a tombstone in this same cemetery—

DE BIA NOBA

POLLECLA QUE ORDEU BENDIT DE BIA NOBA.¹

“Pollecla who sold grain in New Street.”

This picture having been cut in half by the excavation of a later grave, we cannot tell with certainty whether the woman was depicted in the usual attitude, with outstretched arms; but at least there is nothing to show that she was not. In a painting of the next century, however, in this same Catacomb, we find a man merely standing and holding in his hand an object which it is not easy to distinguish, but which seems to be the *pugillares* or tablets that are found in the hands of other figures on some Pagan monuments, as tokens of a certain official position. And it is possible that here also, the religious

¹ B is written for V throughout this epitaph. The epitaph was first published by Bosio, *Rom. Sott.*, p. 214.

idea not having supplied the motive of the picture, it may have been altogether omitted. From more ancient sepulchral paintings it was never absent. The one thought which seems to have occupied the minds of the survivors, if they wrote or painted anything in memory of those who "had died in the Lord," was the same as was expressed by St. Cyprian in the

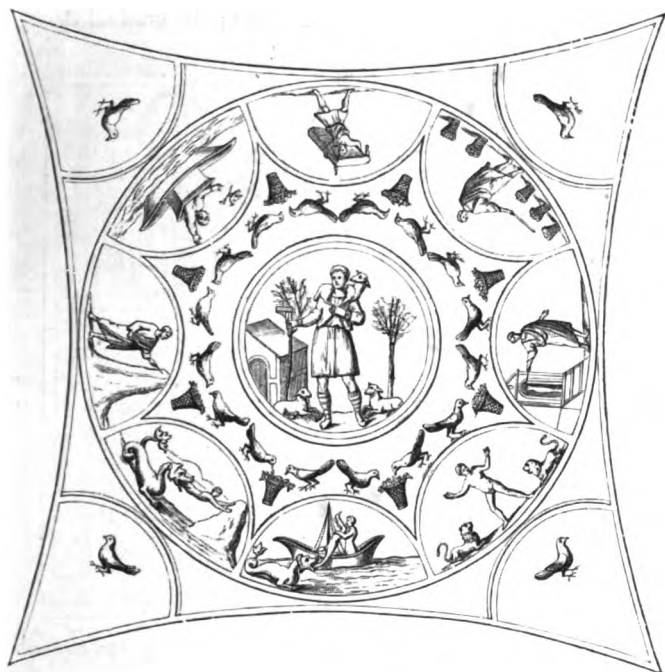


FIG. 54.—Ceiling of a Chamber in San Callisto, of the Third or Fourth Century.

oft-quoted words, that the deceased, "secure about themselves, are solicitous for those whom they have left behind," and therefore pray for them.

Another earlier and almost singular example of representing an individual person in the paintings of the subterranean cemeteries occurs in the same Catacomb. It was evidently desired to give a real personal portrait, and for this purpose only

A painting on canvas in the, Catacombs.
R.S., ii. 268.
Area VII. d.

the bust was executed in fresco, and a painting of the head and face was made on canvas and fastened to the wall by nails, the marks of which yet remain. The canvas, of course, has perished, leaving a faint impression of the face upon the wall. De Rossi attributes it to the middle of the third century.

Decay of
Christian
symbolism.

These instances are sufficiently numerous to indicate the tendency of the artistic taste of the age; the gradual decay of

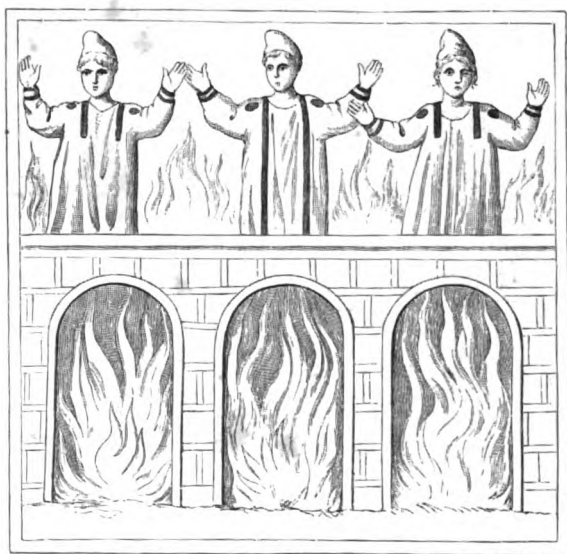


FIG. 55.—*Three Children in the fiery furnace, from Cemetery of St. Hermes (Bosio, p. 565).*

the ancient symbolism, and a preference for personal individual histories on the one hand, or of mere geometrical patterns on the other, wrought either in broad bands of colour, or with thin slabs of marble of various colours.

Biblical sub-
jects retained.

It must not be supposed, however, that Biblical subjects ceased to be represented. They still retained their places on many walls and graves, or filled the whole vault of the ceiling. Even the picture of the greengrocer's stall, which

has been described, was flanked on one side by Moses striking the rock, and probably on the other also by some other of the old familiar scenes, which is now, however, too much defaced to allow us to recognise it. The histories which seem to have been used most frequently were those of the Adoration of the Infant Jesus by the Wise Men, and of the Three Children cast into the fiery furnace. The appropriateness of

Adoration of the wise men.

Three Children in the fiery furnace.

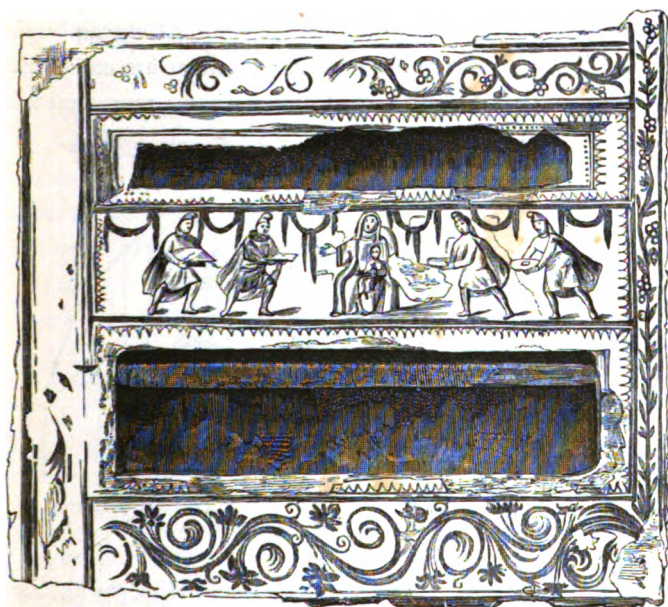


FIG. 56.—Fresco in Catacomb of Domitilla, representing four Wise Men offering their Gifts.

this latter history to the times of persecution is too obvious to need mention. It would be difficult to find one which conveyed a more salutary lesson of consolation and encouragement to the Church, so long as she was subjected, in the inscrutable wisdom of God's providence, to the fiery blast of persecution, whilst yet to many of her martyrs there was vouchsafed the sensible support and presence of Him for Whom they suffered, so that to them likewise the very flames

became "like the blowing of a wind bringing dew, and the fire touched them not at all, nor troubled them, nor did them any harm."¹ This subject does not appear at all amongst the most ancient paintings; but it is very frequent among those which belong to the end of the third century, and a still later period.

The same may be said also of the adoration of the infant Jesus by the wise men from the East. De Rossi speaks of more than twenty paintings of this scene in the Catacombs, and it is still more common in sculpture; but none are earlier than the third century. The Holy Child is always represented, as



FIG. 57.—Fresco in Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus, representing only two Wise Men offering their Gifts.

the Evangelist tells us the wise men found Him, "with Mary His mother."² He is sitting on her lap, and generally (in three-fourths of the examples) three Magi stand before Him. In three or four instances, however, she occupies the middle of the scene; and here, in order to keep a proper balance between the two sides of the picture, the number of the Magi is increased or diminished; there are either four, as in the Cemetery of Domitilla, or only two, as in that of SS. Peter and Marcellinus. It is clear, however, that three was already

¹ Dan. iii. 50. See St. Cyprian, Epist. vi. 4; Sergio, &c.
St. Matthew ii. 11.

known as the traditional number;¹ for even in one of the instances we have quoted we can still trace the original sketch of the artist, designing another arrangement of the scene with three figures only; then, mistrusting the result, he abandoned the attempt, and sacrificed historic truth to the exigencies of his art, just as, at a somewhat later period, the carver of a marble vase boldly places our Blessed Lady between six shepherds and six Magi, that the number may correspond with the other side of his work, where our Blessed Lord sits in the middle of the twelve Apostles. De Rossi assigns the two examples we have given to the first and second half of the third century respectively.

There is yet another scene from the Book of Daniel, of which there are one or two representations in the Catacombs. The one which we are going to describe is in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, and is symbolical in character; but Garrucci describes another elsewhere, which is more literal and his-

Susanna and the Elders, types of the Church and her enemies, the Jews, and the Gentiles.



FIG. 58.—*Susanna and the Elders, from the Cemetery of St. Callixtus.*

torical. In our own picture we have a lamb standing between two wolves; and had there been no legend added, we should have thought we had done enough to explain it, if we quoted the words spoken when our Lord sent forth the seventy-two disciples "into every city and place whither He Himself was to come"—"Behold I send you as lambs among wolves." And no doubt this was the saying which suggested to the artist the particular form of his illustration. We learn, however, from

¹ It is generally said that St. Leo the Great, or St. Maximus of Turin, are the first witnesses to this tradition. Origen, however, implies it; and the evidence of the monuments is all on the same side.—Patrizi de Evangel. iii., diss. xxvii. pars. 2da.

himself that he also meant a good deal more; for over the head of the lamb he wrote the name of *Susanna*, and over one of the wolves *Senioris* (for *Seniores*) or elders. Neither are we left in any uncertainty as to the sense in which the story of Susanna and the elders was understood at that time. "We are able to apprehend," says Hippolytus,¹ "the real meaning of all that befel Susanna; for we see it fulfilled in the present condition of the Church. Susanna prefigured the Church, and Joachim, her husband, Christ, and the garden, the calling of the saints, who are planted like fruitful trees in the Church; and Babylon is the world; and the two elders are set forth as a figure of the two peoples that plot against the Church; the one, namely, of the circumcision, and the other of the Gentiles. Both these strive to raise persecutions and afflictions against the Church, and seek how they may corrupt her, though they do not agree with each other. They watch and busy themselves with the dealings of the Church; and when they conspire to destroy any of the saints, they watch for a fit time, and enter the house of God while all there are praying and praising God, and seize some of them and carry them off, and keep hold of them, saying, "Come, consent with us, and worship our god; and if not, we will bear witness against you." And when they refuse, they drag them before the court, and accuse them of acting contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, and condemn them to death. All these things were figuratively represented in the blessed Susanna for our sakes, that we who now believe in God might not regard the things that are now done in the Church as strange, but believe them all to have been set forth in figure by the patriarchs of old, as the Apostle also says, "All these things happened to them in figure, and they are written for our correction, upon whom the ends of the world are come."¹

¹ See the Writings of Hippolytus in the Ante-Nicene Library, vol. i. pp. 478-481.

² 1 Cor. x. 11.

We have reserved to the last all mention of that singular painting which was set before our readers in Plate VIII. of our first volume, and which we there described¹ as representing two martyrs (probably Parthenius and Calocerus) on their trial before the tribunal of the emperor. The general subject which it was intended to represent can hardly be called in question. It is certain, both from internal evidence and from comparison with other paintings, that it is a judicial scene; but there may be room for some difference of opinion as to a few of the details.

The painting is very remarkable on every account, both for its subject and its execution. For, from the whole cycle of works of Christian art belonging to the first three centuries, no other certain example can be produced of a representation of the trial or sufferings of a martyr. Moreover, the artist has manifestly taken unusual pains to put life and character into his figures; and it must be allowed that his efforts have not been altogether unsuccessful. The anger and indignation of the judge are well expressed in his attitude and action, whilst in the face of the martyr there shines forth a certain reflection of firm faith, and a sense of calm or even joyful security amid all that may await him. The action and expression of the man who is turning away and going off from the scene also clearly denotes disappointment and discomfiture.

This person wears a wreath round his head, and was probably the priest (*sacerdos coronatus*), who was present to inaugurate the sacrificial rite which was always proposed to the accused Christians as a condition of their discharge, but which would have been equivalent to an act of apostasy. The judge who stands on the raised platform is clothed in tunic and pallium; and he, too, wears a wreath of ivy round his head. It is conjectured both by De Rossi and by Garrucci that it is intended to be the emperor himself. The martyr condemned is a very young man. He wears only the white tunic, striped

¹ See Part I. p. 345.

with purple; and he is represented as opening both his arms, as though he were answering the question proposed to him with calmness and courage. The fourth and last figure, of a man standing by his side, is unhappily too mutilated and defaced to allow us to speak with any confidence as to its character. It almost looks as though he were holding a roll of parchment or a volume in his hands; but whether he was arraigned on the same charge as the prisoner, or was himself the accuser, or perhaps an assessor of the judge, we cannot pretend to define. All that we know, or can with any reason conjecture,¹ as to the history of the chamber in which this painting is to be seen, makes us incline to accept the first of these suppositions rather than either of the others; but the question cannot now be decided. There was once another painting on the opposite wall, apparently representing another act in the same drama; but in its present condition, De Rossi dares not hazard any positive statement of its subject.

This painting occurs in the area of the Catacomb of St. Callixtus which contains the epitaph of St. Eusebius. In the adjoining *area*, which take their name from St. Soteris, there is not a single *cubiculum* which is decorated throughout with painting; but there are a few painted *arcosolia*. In the most ancient of these *area* there are six or seven of these; in the second, only two; in the third, one; and in the latest, none at all. We gather from this that, as time went on, towards the close of the third century and beginning of the fourth, artists became more scarce; at any rate they were much less employed in the Catacombs. By far the best painting of all in the *area* of St. Soteris is that which we have seen of the five saints—Dionysas and her companions; and it is also the oldest.

R.S., iii. 77. 49.

There is evidence that, about the same time, mosaics and marbles were occasionally used to ornament the chapels. The example of this, which is most familiar to visitors to the Cata-

¹ See Part I. p. 345.

combs, occurs in the chamber in which St. Eusebius was buried, and belongs, therefore, to the early part of the fourth century. The ceiling of this chamber was divided into hexagonal and polygonal compartments, in very brilliant colours, filled with birds and flowers alternately. But the *arcosolia* were covered with mosaics, and the walls with marbles. All is now sadly ruined ; but it is still possible to distinguish

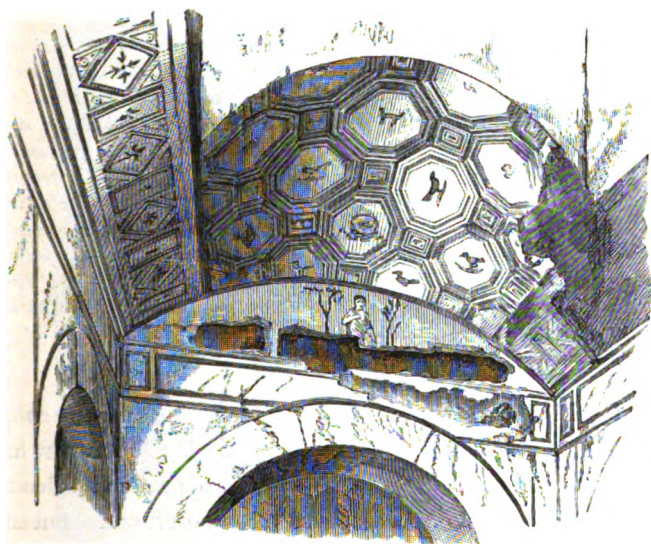


FIG. 59.—Ceiling of Cubiculum of St. Eusebius in Area V.I. of St. Callixtus.

among the remains of the mosaic work traces of one of the most common Christian symbols—a double-handled vessel, with a bird on either side of it ; also certain winged figures, which probably represented the seasons, and a few other accessories of ornament ; but the main figures and general design have perished. The only trace of Scriptural subjects upon the walls may be seen in our woodcut—the Good Shepherd, painted above the *arcosolium*.

CHAPTER III.

PAINTINGS OF THE FOURTH CENTURY.

A remarkable painting of the Good Shepherd in Catacomb of St. Callixtus examined in detail—Scenes from the life of Moses, and multiplication of the loaves and fishes—The old subjects continued, but treated less symbolically—Paintings of the Liberian area of San Callisto, much decayed in consequence of bad quality of the plaster—First appearance in painting of the monogram—Different forms of it—First appearance of the nimbus—Its meaning, and history of its use—Parable of wise and foolish virgins—Denial of our Lord by St. Peter—The manna—Martyrs or other saints welcoming the deceased to heaven—Conjectural interpretation of a singular painting in San Callisto—The Three Children in the fiery furnace accompanied by the Angel of the Lord—Gradual disuse of painting, first of the chambers, and then of the tombs.

WITH the conversion of Constantine a new epoch dawned upon the Church; and if Christian art had still retained the vigour of her youth, a new and splendid field would have now been opened for her exertions. But she was gradually departing further and further from the use of classical types, and before the close of the fourth century she gave tokens of degenerating into that stiff conventionality of style which in its full development goes under the name of Byzantine.

There are a few paintings belonging to the earlier half of the century, and carrying on, at least partially, the artistic traditions of an earlier age, which are sufficiently interesting to deserve detailed examination. One in particular is a painting in which the parable of the Good Shepherd may be considered to have reached its most perfect development. Representations of this subject became gradually more and more rare,

A remarkable painting of the Good Shepherd described

when the ages of persecution had ceased. It is not to be found on a single epitaph bearing a date between the conversion of Constantine and the end of the sixth century, though frequently repeated on the tombstones of the earlier period. In paintings also it occurs less frequently than before. In a fresco on the walls of a subterranean cemetery in the country,¹



FIG. 60.—Fresco ornamenting an Arcosolium in Cemetery of Genesio.

belonging apparently to the end of the fourth century, it was deemed necessary to add the title *Pastor* to the figure. In the instance now before us, which belongs to the earlier half of the century, the figure is surrounded with a rich and varied *entourage*, adding greatly to its significance.

¹ See Part I. p. 195.

The shepherd here occupies his usual position in the centre of the painting, bearing the lost sheep upon his shoulders. He stands amid trees in a garden, and has another sheep or goat on either side of him. But because he has still other sheep and explained. also which are not yet of his fold, but whom it is necessary that he should bring, and that they should hear his voice,¹ therefore two Apostles—probably St. Peter and St. Paul, the Apostles of the Jews and Gentiles respectively, and representing therefore the whole Apostolate from the beginning to the end—are seen hurrying away from his side to fulfil the mission entrusted to them. He had said, “Going, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;”² and here they take of the waters of Divine grace which flow from the mystical Rock of Christ, to pour them on the heads of the sheep which surround them; thus illustrating in the most graphic manner the words of St. Cyprian, that it is by means of this water that we are made the sheep of Christ.³ The sheep receive the proffered gift according to their different dispositions: whilst one obeys the call, another turns his back to it; whilst one with uplifted head drinks in the message with eager attention, another keeps his head steadily towards the ground, intent on the pasturage which is offered him in the goods of the natural world. And the water which is made to fall upon them seems to bear a certain proportion to these varieties of attitude, which we have supposed to betoken a difference of inward feeling.

R.S. ii. 350.

Moses striking the rock and taking off his shoe.

This remarkable painting covers the back of the wall above an *arcosolium*. On one side of the same recess, to the right of the spectator, appears the figure of Moses, which our readers have already seen in page 108. He too is represented in an unusual manner. Instead of being depicted alone in the act of striking the rock, one of the children of Israel stands in front of him, eagerly quenching his thirst at the miraculous stream;

¹ St. John x. 16.

² St. Matt. xxviii. 20.

³ Hæc est aqua in Ecclesiâ sanctâ, quæ oves facit. *Epist. lxxi.*

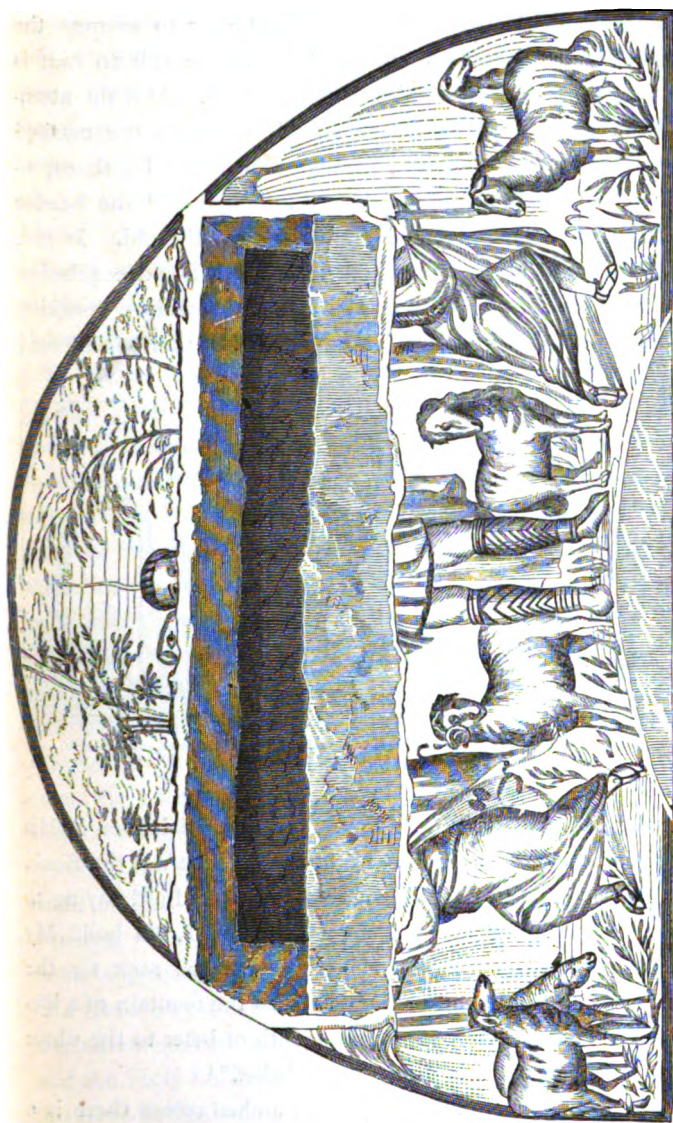


FIG. 61.—*The Good Shepherd, two of the Apostles, and the Water flowing from the Rock, united in one Allegorical Composition.*

R.S., iii. 79.

and behind him is another scene from the life of Moses, *viz.*, his taking off his shoes before drawing near to witness the manifestation of the presence of God, Whose call to him is indicated by the hand issuing from the cloud. And the attention of our readers has been already called to the marked difference between the two portraits of the Jewish legislator, indicating the artist's desire to suggest a thought of "the Leader of the new people of Israel" rather than of the old. It is a pictorial rendering of the same idea which found expression in the next century by the mouth of St. Maximus, speaking from the episcopal chair of Turin, and saying that our Blessed



FIG. 62.—Two scenes in one picture: Moses taking off his shoes, and Moses striking the rock.

Lord "had vouchsafed to give to Peter a participation in His own name; for as, according to St. Paul, Christ was the Rock, so Peter was by Christ made a rock also, the Lord saying to him, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church;' because, as water flowed from the rock for the Lord's people thirsting in the desert, so the fountain of a life-giving confession flowed from the mouth of Peter to the whole world wearied with the dryness of unbelief."¹

Multiplication
of loaves and
fishes.

On the opposite side of the same arched recess there is a painting of our Lord between two of His Apostles, laying His

¹ Opp. p. 219, ed. 1784.

hands on two fish and a basket of bread which they present to Him, while six other baskets of bread lie at His feet.

Here, then, we have precisely the same group of doctrines brought together as in the sacramental chambers—Baptism, in the water flowing from the rock ; Penance, in the wandering sheep brought back on the shoulders of the Good Shepherd, and the Holy Eucharist in the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. But it is obvious to remark the far nearer approach to literalism in this representation, as compared with the more secret and mystical allusions to the same doctrines which characterised the paintings of the second or third century.

De Rossi attributes these to the earlier half of the fourth century. At least he says it cannot be later than that ; for one of the paintings has been cut through and spoilt, not in the usual manner, by a grave, but by a niche made to receive a lamp, the smoke from which has quite obliterated parts of the figures. This must have been done whilst yet the chamber was in use as a place of assembly for purposes of religious worship ; yet there is no token of the tomb ever having been the sepulchre of a martyr. There is no trace on the walls of any inscriptions by the pious pilgrims of the fifth and sixth centuries, and no staircase anywhere in the neighbourhood, by which pilgrims could have gained access to it from the outer world. Indeed, the tomb itself is much too low to have been used as an altar ; the altar must have been portable, not fixed, and perhaps the episcopal chair may have been originally placed against the wall under the principal painting. Certainly it would have been difficult to find a more appropriate selection of subjects for the ornamentation of a Christian teacher's pulpit ; the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism, Penance, and the Holy Eucharist. We cannot abandon the idea of the chamber having been used as a place of assembly ; for, besides the usual corresponding chamber on the opposite side of the gallery, the *arcosolium* of that second chamber was destroyed,

Old subjects
treated more
literally or
historically.

Precise date
of this painting.

and a third chamber, or rather a long, wide gallery, was excavated at the back of it, which would not have been necessary to gain more room for burying the dead, but only for the accommodation of the living. There is no shaft, however, to the open air, which would seem to indicate that it was made during some period of severe persecution, when it was necessary to observe great care and secrecy, as, for instance, during the persecution of Diocletian. For these reasons we are inclined to prefer the beginning of the fourth century as the probable date of this painting, rather than any later period.

Paintings of
the Liberian
area of San
Callisto.

It will facilitate our present purpose, which is to impress upon our readers as clear an idea as we can of the changes which came over the face of Christian art in each succeeding period of the first four or five hundred years of its existence, if we go through a certain portion of the Catacombs belonging to the particular period under review, and note all the paintings it contains. It is for this reason that in our last chapter so many of our examples were taken from the area of St. Soteris in the Catacomb of Callixtus. And the same motive bids us select for the fourth century another area of the same necropolis; an area which stands in our map as No. XII., and to which De Rossi has given the name of the Liberian area, because the dates of the epitaphs and other indications make it certain that it was used during the Pontificate of Liberius, *i.e.*, in the latter half of the fourth century.

R. S., iii. 247.

The chief characteristics of this area are an almost continual series of *arcosolia*, a large number of chambers of unusual dimensions, and very spacious *luminaria*. But as in its architecture it is superior to older parts of the Catacombs (as also in the materials of some of its decorations, marbles, and mosaics), so in its paintings it is very inferior. Indeed, the first impression of the visitor is, that there are no paintings in it at all. A more careful examination, however, suffices to correct this error. Two of the chambers, and several of the *arcosolia*, were once covered with paintings, but the plaster

Many of them
have perished,
from the bad-
ness of the
plaster on
which they
were executed.

on which they were executed was of so poor a kind that all traces of them have well-nigh disappeared. A gradual deterioration in the quality of the plaster has constantly been observed to mark the successive periods of excavation; but in this area the deterioration has reached its utmost limits. The plaster on the walls of the crypts of Lucina, and the chambers of the earliest area of St. Callixtus, was made of ground marble; it was of exquisite fineness, hard and dry, and of great durability; but the plaster of the chambers of which we are now speaking has thrown out such a blossom as almost to efface all the colours of the decoration. De Rossi has taken great pains to revive them, and has so far succeeded as to be able to tell us the general character of all, and even to give us trustworthy copies of some of them.

Here is one, in which (for the first time in the Cemetery of Callixtus) we see the Constantinian monogram painted above

First appearance in painting of the monogram.

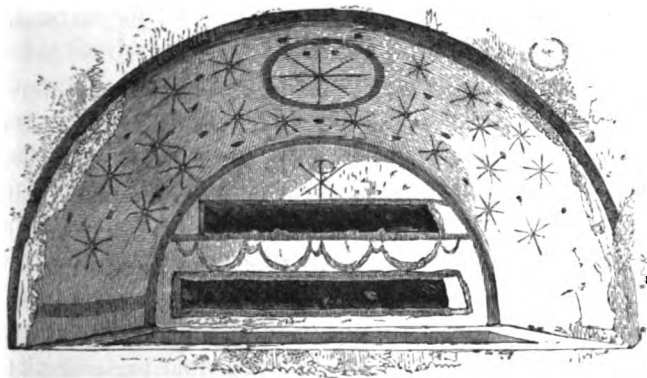


FIG. 63.—*Earliest instance of the Monogram as part of the Ornamentation of an Arcosolium in the Cemetery of Callixtus.*

one of the graves. The only other example of this symbol entering into the decorations of a chamber in this Catacomb is in the Papal crypt, where it appears in the centre of the arch of the doorway, and forms part of the new ornamentation that was given to that chapel either by Pope Damasus or by

Sixtus III., *i.e.*, between A.D. 370 and 440.¹ It is probable that the stars which form the principal part of the decoration of this *arcosolium* were themselves also intended to stand as substitutes for the monogram, just as we shall presently see the monogram used for the star in the Catacomb of Cyriaca: at least, one of them is made much larger than the rest, and enclosed within a circle; it occupies the centre of the vault, just where the monogram might have been expected, or where, in earlier times, the Good Shepherd or some principal figure of the well-known Biblical cycle would have been placed. De Rossi considers it probable that the eight rays of the star were formed out of the combination of the letter X with a plain equilateral cross.

R.S., iii. 250.

The sign of the cross in continual use, but not often represented.

The cross is the sign, *par excellence*, of Christ and of a Christian. It is especially so called by Clement of Alexandria.² It was the "Thau (T) which was to be marked upon the foreheads of the men that sighed in the midst of Jerusalem;"³ and the sign, also, wherewith "the servants of God were signed in their foreheads" in the Apocalyptic vision⁴ of the true Catholic Jerusalem.⁵ No wonder, then, that the first Christians used to sign themselves with it "at every step, at every coming in and going out, when they put on their shoes and their clothes, at the bath, at the table, when the lights are brought in at night, on going to bed, on sitting down—in short, at every change of action."⁶ On the other hand, it was held accursed by the Jews, and it indicated a painful and disgraceful death to the Gentiles. No wonder, then, that the Christians should abstain from presenting it to the public gaze. It was one thing to make a sign upon themselves which could be modified both as to distinctness and publicity according to circumstances, and quite another to

¹ See Part I., p. 293.

² Strom. vi. 11.

³ Ezech. ix. 4.

⁴ Apoc. vii. 3.

⁵ Tertullian c. Marc., iii. 22. See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, p. 167

⁶ Tertullian de Corona, 3.

set up the same sign in a clear and definite form in painting upon the walls. If they ventured upon doing this at all, we should expect that it would be only in some disguised form, such as might be transparent to the initiated, and pass unnoticed by others, as in the form of the mast and sail-yards of a vessel, or the apparently accidental arrangement of the boughs and branches of a tree, such as we have seen in Figures 43, 51, in pages 154, 165.

But after the conversion of Constantine and the rapid extension of Christianity, there was no longer the same necessity for concealment. The cross might now be exhibited publicly. But in what form should it be shown? The scene on Mount Calvary might be considered with reference to its actual circumstances, and therefore depicted as the most awful of crimes on the part of the agents, or the most sublime of sacrifices on the part of the Victim; but it might also be considered only with reference to its results, and then it was the way to glory,¹ the price of victory, a very crown of triumph. It was this latter point of view that naturally most recommended itself to men who had lived in the midst of combats, and aspired to the palm of martyrdom. This was also the most natural aspect of the cross to be taken by men who were witnesses of the triumph of the Church, and who saw in her history a sort of repetition or reflection of the Passion and Resurrection of her Lord.

In a later age, when the profession of Christianity had become universal, and men were in danger of forgetting its obligations amid the seductive pleasures of the world, it might be useful or necessary to bring more prominently forward the sufferings of their Divine Head, and to put them in mind that they had been bought with a great price, that the crucified One was their Exemplar, that "Christ having suffered in the flesh," it behoved them also to be "armed with the same thought,"² and to crucify their flesh with its affections and

Different ways
of viewing the
cross.

In fourth
century as a
sign of
triumph.

¹ St. Luke xxiv. 26.

² 1 Peter iv. 1.

lusts. But in the first hour of the Church's triumph we are not surprised to find that the cross appeared rather as an emblem of victory than as a type of suffering. It took its place among the most conspicuous ornaments of the *arcosolia*, or on the vaulted roofs of the chambers, and in different shapes.

Different
forms of the
monogram.

The principal forms in which the cross appears is the monogram in one or other of its numerous varieties ; but there is

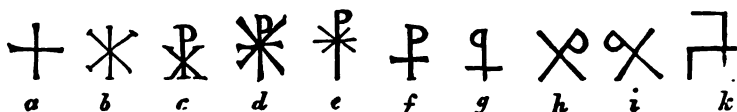


FIG. 64.—Different forms of the Cross and Monogram.

some difficulty in determining the precise periods of the introduction and continuance of the use of any of these. Even the precise form of the original monogram of Constantine is still a subject of dispute. Eusebius¹ tells us, on the authority of the Emperor himself, that, on the eve of his encounter with Maxentius, our Blessed Lord appeared to him in the night, bearing a cross, and that He commanded him to have a similar representation made, and to use it as a protection against the enemy. Wherefore, on the following day, Constantine caused artists to be summoned, and enjoined them to make a facsimile of what he should describe to them. Thereupon they took a gilt spear, fastened to it a cross-bar, and surmounted the whole with a garland set with gold and precious stones, in the centre of which they placed, as a sign of the saving Name, the two first letters which formed it, viz., P crossed in the middle by X (*χριστοῦ τοῦ Πατρὸς τοῦ σωτῆρος*). And this sign the emperor henceforth wore upon his helmet.

According to Lactantius,² he also caused the shields of his soldiers to be marked in the same way, *transversâ litterâ X summo capite circumflexo Christum in scutis notat*. This description by Lactantius seems most closely to correspond with

¹ Vit. Const. i. 31.

² De Mort. Persec. 44.

our form *h*. But the expressions of Eusebius are less definite, and might be meant either for *c*, *f*, or *h*. This latter form occurs on the coins of Magnentius, A.D. 350, and other emperors; whereas, on those of Constantius and his sons, who were so much nearer to the date of the original vision, the form *c* is more frequently met with, side by side (in some instances) with the simple cross. After the separation of the Eastern Empire from that of the West, under Arcadius and Honorius, we more frequently meet with the form X on the *labarum*, or that which we have marked *b*, whereas *c*, *f*, and *h* gradually disappear. The dates of these various forms, when inscribed upon gravestones, belong to another branch of our subject.¹ Here we need only observe that the form *c* was the most frequently employed in decoration, and that the form *h*, or *crux gammata*, appears on the garments of certain persons who are figured in the wall paintings of the Catacombs after the middle of the third century. We have shown elsewhere that this form of the cross was no invention of the Christians, nor any part of their earliest cycle of symbols, but was chosen by them, in accordance with that disposition, of which they gave so many indications, the desire to discover in all directions new connecting links and points of resemblance between their own and other systems of religious belief and symbols.

On monuments later than the middle of the fourth century the monogram is very commonly accompanied by A Ω, Alpha and Omega, as a symbol of Him who is the Beginning and End of all things.

In this same Liberian area we find also the earliest specimen which the Catacomb of Callixtus has revealed to us of the nimbus. "The nimbus," says the Count de Saint-Laurent,² "is a pictorial sign, generally of circular form, which surrounds the head, and represents light. By some ancient writers it has been confounded with the crown, and called by the same

First appearance of the nimbus.

¹ See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, pp. 166-170.

² Guide de l'Art Chrétien, tom. ii. p. 6.

Its meaning.

name ; but it differs from a crown in this, that it does not rest upon the head, but is supposed to be suspended over it. The nimbus and the crown have this in common, that they both express an idea of dignity ; and examples are not wanting in which one of these emblems has been used to express that particular kind of dignity which, according to later usage, belongs more appropriately to the other. It is now the established practice to use the crown as a sign of royalty, and the nimbus of sanctity. And if the Saints are sometimes represented as crowned, this is because they are described in Holy Scripture as reigning in heaven.

Its use by Pagans.

“The nimbus was in use before the Christian era, and has continued among some Pagan people since that time. We need not enter upon any discussion as to its origin ; it is sufficient to say that it is intimately connected with the double signification which has always attached to light and to the human head. The personification, therefore, of the Sun had special claims to the use of this ornament. It does not appear, however, that the primary idea in attaching the nimbus to individuals was to represent them as invested with the Sun itself. Rather the word would seem intended to indicate a luminous cloud, which only reflected the Sun’s rays.”

Scriptural imagery suggesting it.

When Christians began to make use of it, it was in honour of Him who said of Himself that He was the Light. And although they could not be ignorant, of course, of the use that was being made of the figure by the social world in the midst of which they lived, the example of others was hardly necessary to suggest it to them. Imagery of the same kind occurs in Holy Scripture itself. The “horned face”¹ of Moses on his descent from Mount Sinai could hardly have been understood in any other way. “The glory of the Lord” had manifested itself to the children of Israel as “a burning fire.”² In the vision of the Ancient of Days vouchsafed to Daniel,³ “a

¹ Exod. xxxiv. 30.

² Exod. xxiv. 17.

³ Dan. vii. 10.

swift stream of fire issued forth from before Him ;" or, as it is expressed in the similar vision¹ in the Apocalypse, "His face was as the sun shineth in his power." Finally, the great sign which appeared in heaven was of a woman "clothed with the sun."²

In all these instances there is the same fundamental idea ; and it was only natural that Christians should adopt for the pictorial representation of it that particular form (a circular disc) with which they were already familiar. When did they begin to use it ? Probably as soon as they could give public honour to representations of our Blessed Lord, *i.e.*, in the fourth century. There certainly is no proof that they ever used it before.

In the glass cups or plates found in the Catacombs, of which we shall have to speak in a later chapter, it is very rarely to be seen ; and it is generally allowed that most of these objects range from the middle of the third to the middle of the fourth century. In many of them, crowns may be seen by the side of the Saints, being offered to them by birds, or held in their own hands, but not placed upon their heads ; in some also our Lord is represented in the act of crowning SS. Peter and Paul, or others ; but the *nimbus* itself will scarcely be found on a dozen of them altogether. In the mosaics, on the other hand, which belong to a later age, it is far otherwise. In those of the church (or mausoleum, whichever it should be rightly called) of Sta. Costanza, belonging to the age of Constantine, our Lord has the *nimbus*, the Apostles have not. A similar distinction is to be noted in the mosaics of St. Agatha in Ravenna of the year 400 ; but here our Lord has it in its more modern form, enclosing a cross, and on the head of the angels it is unornamented. The same decorated form of the *nimbus* is used on the head of Christ in the mosaics of Sta. Sabina (A.D. 424) and of St. Paul's (A.D. 441), both in Rome ; where the apostles, evangelists, and others either have it plain, or none at all.

Period and manner of its use by Christians,

¹ Apoc. i. 16.

² Ibid. xii. 1.

in fifth
century,

In some of the mosaics of the fifth century at Ravenna, it is placed not only on the head of our Lord, His holy mother, and the angels, but also on those of Justinian and his wife Theodora, and at St. Mary Major's in Rome (A.D. 433) even on that of Herod.¹ In MSS. of the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, and in some of the painted windows of the Middle Ages, it is given to the sun and moon, to Pharaoh, Saul, Balaam, Constantine II., and all the bishops of the Second Council of Nice, to Judas, the foolish virgins (as well as the wise), the devil, and the beast of the Apocalypse! Probably, in these instances, it was intended to do honour to the office, and not to the individuals; to the apostleship, the profession of virginity, the angelic nature, the kingly or episcopal office, and strength and power generally.

in Middle
Ages,

in fourth
century.

But let us return to its more ancient use among Christians. Old Christian writers² tell us that on the head of Christ and His Saints it denoted the light of eternal glory with which they are crowned in heaven. Garrucci³ considers that in the fifth century Christian artists either used or omitted it indifferently, but that after that time its use became universal. Martigny,⁴ a more recent and cautious authority, distinguishes with greater accuracy when he says that it was used for our Blessed Lord occasionally before the days of Constantine, and constantly afterwards; for the angels, from the beginning of the fifth century, and generally before the end of the sixth; but that it was not till towards the end of the seventh that it became the rule for all Saints indifferently. And De Rossi, who is more accurate than either, says it began to be given to the Blessed Virgin and SS. Peter and Paul, as well as to our Lord, as early as the fourth century.

Bullettino,
1867, p. 44.

We have said that it appears in an area of the Catacomb of

¹ Ciampini, *Vet. Monum.*, i. p. 200.

² Isidor. *Etym.*, xix. 31. Honor. Aug., I., c. 133.

³ Vetri, &c., p. 141.

⁴ *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Chrétiennes*, p. 499, in verb. *Aimbus*.

Callixtus which belongs to that period ; but as there is some difficulty in the interpretation of that painting, we will first produce a more simple example, taken from the principal *arcosolium* of a chamber in the Catacomb of Cyriaca, which was brought to light some fifteen or twenty years ago, in consequence of the enlargement of the Campo Santo, or modern cemetery of Rome.

The whole of the back of the recess of this *arcosolium* is *Bullettino, 1863, 78.*



FIG. 65.—*The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, on the back of an arcosolium in the Catacomb of Cyriaca.*

occupied by a representation of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. Our Lord stands in the middle, clad in a tunic and cloak, and is in the act of raising His right hand as though to invite the five maidens of different ages, who are coming towards Him holding aloft burning torches in their hands. On His left the five foolish virgins stand unnoticed, their extinguished torches either resting on their shoulders or turned downwards to the ground. All ten are without any

Parable of the
wise and fool-
ish virgins

veils on their heads, and wear loose tunics, ornamented with a double strip of purple, just as other young girls were wont to be depicted on the sepulchral monuments of the same period.

at the tomb
of a virgin.

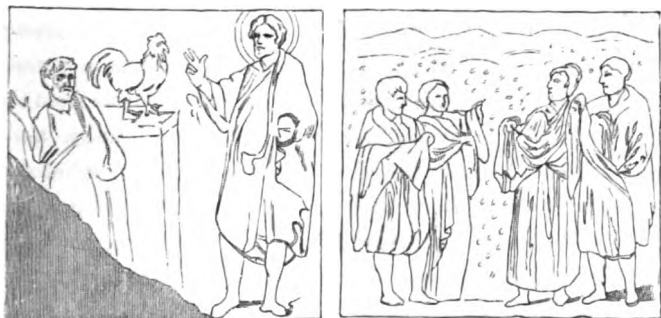
Above the arch of this tomb is the figure of an *orante*, probably the occupant of the grave; and there is reason to believe that she was a virgin consecrated to God. This conjecture (of De Rossi's) does not depend merely upon the choice of subject for the decoration of the tomb, but upon this circumstance, coupled with the large number of inscriptions found in this particular cemetery, to the memory of "holy virgins," "sacred virgins," "virgins devoted to God," or "the handmaids of God;" and all belonging to the fourth or fifth century. It is unquestionable (he says) that about the middle of the fourth century, or a little later, there began in Rome houses of virgins and widows, living together under certain rules of discipline, like monasteries; and the finding of so many of these epitaphs in one place, and of this date, warrant us in conjecturing that here, near the Basilica of St. Laurence, there was one of the earliest convents of the Roman Church, just as there was another also near the Basilica of St. Agnes.

Denial of our
Lord by St.
Peter,

why so
frequently
represented.

On the sides of the same arched vault are two other scenes, in one of which our Lord again appears with the nimbus. The cock on the pillar shows that He is in the act of foretelling to Peter his threefold denial of Him, a scene which—whatever may have been the motive for its selection—is continually repeated on the sarcophagi of this same period. Perhaps it was chosen from a motive of humility, according to the interpretation of the incident which we find in some of the Homilies of the Fathers, who connect very beautifully St. Peter's fall with the high office for which he was destined, in this way: they say that he was allowed to fall in a more signal manner than any other of the Apostles, because to him were to be entrusted the keys of the kingdom of heaven. It was necessary, therefore, that he should be a penitent, lest innocence should refuse

to open the gate to those who had fallen and risen again. De Rossi, however, prefers to interpret this scene more simply, as an emblem of faith. He observes that at the same time that our Blessed Lord foretold the shameful fall of Peter, he also gave an indication of his future firmness and indefectibility in the faith. "Jesus said, I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren."¹ On the sarcophagi St. Peter and the cock are almost always followed by St. Peter's apprehension and imprisonment by the Jews, and by Moses (or Peter) striking the mystical rock. Thus his weakness is brought into immediate juxtaposition with the strength of his faith in confessing Christ boldly



FIGS. 66, 67.—*Denial of our Lord by St. Peter, and the Gathering of Manna, on opposite sides of the same arcosolium in Catacomb of St. Cyriaca.*

before men, and with the immovable firmness of that Rock whence flows the stream of evangelical doctrine and the grace of the Sacraments.

The scene painted on the other side of the vault, it is not quite so easy to identify. De Rossi, however, concludes without hesitation, that it represents the fall of manna from heaven for the support of the children of Israel in the wilderness. He says that towards the top of the painting there are clouds, above which he distinguishes a crown of palm-branches, and enclosing, probably, the sacred monogram. From this

The manna.

¹ St. Luke xxii. 32.

crown or circle there shoot forth a number of rays which reach the clouds, and from the clouds fall certain specks or flakes of a blue or greyish colour. Underneath, two men and two women, in travelling costume, hold out the folds of their garments to catch the falling flakes; and although this does not correspond with the letter of the historical narrative (which tells us that the manna covered the face of the earth like dew¹), there is nothing strange in supposing the artist to have departed from the literal truth for the sake of selecting a position more suited to his purpose.

Introduction
of the deceased
to the
heavenly
banquet.

There yet remains another scene of this series, which requires to be explained. On the outer wall of the *arcosolium* is the figure of a lady (see Fig. 65) dressed in the same way as the virgins of the parable, but in the position of an *orante*. On either side of her stands a young man clothed in a short tunic, ornamented with *calliculæ* and stripes of purple from the shoulders to the breast; and these men are drawing aside two rich curtains with the evident purpose of giving admission to the lady who is between them. This can be nothing else but the heavenly banquet, the final and everlasting reward of the blessed; the marriage-feast, to which the wise virgins were admitted, who by faith and vigilance had kept their lamps trimmed, and by a frequent participation in "the living bread which came down from heaven," had rendered themselves worthy of receiving the promises of Christ, that He "would raise them up in the last day."²

Thus, this series of paintings is hardly less interesting or less complete, as a lesson of instruction, than the more famous series, to which we have so frequently to refer, in the sacramental chapels. They are in a different style of art, and manifestly of later date; but they seem to have been selected with the same care, and designed to set forth the same Divine truths. And although we do not know of any other place in the Catacombs in which they are all brought

¹ Exod. xvi. 14.

² St. John vi. 51, 55.

together with the same fulness of detail and symmetry of arrangement, other examples may be found of each part of them separately, or one or two parts united, either in precisely the same form, or with such slight variation as in no way to interfere with the interpretation we have given of them. Thus, in the only other representation of the parable of the virgins with which we are acquainted, and which may be seen in the Catacomb which goes by the name of St. Agnes, five virgins stand on one side of the central figure, and the heavenly banquet appears on the other side.

In the Cemetery of Domitilla, in the gallery at the back of the apse of the Basilica of Petronilla, we have a scene corresponding to the introduction of this unknown virgin to the heavenly banquet. Only in this later painting (which however was certainly executed before the fifth century) Paradise is symbolised, not by a feast, but by flowers; faith too is symbolised, not by the history of St. Peter, but by the Holy Scriptures, which lie in a small chest of volumes at the feet of the deceased, who is represented as already introduced into heaven by one whose name is added, as well as the name of the deceased herself. The deceased was a matron named Veneranda, who is clothed in a full dalmatic, and has a veil on her head, the extremities of which are adorned with a fringe and purple *calliculae*, very like the veil of Dionysas and her companions in Plate XIV. The name of her patroness is Petronilla, near whose sepulchre she is buried; thus setting before us in a visible form the same doctrine and practice which we find commended by a great Bishop and preacher of about the same age, viz., that whereas "we ought to venerate with great devotion all the martyrs, yet those have a special claim upon us whose relics we have; between whom and ourselves there is a certain relationship of familiarity; when we leave the body, they receive us."¹ The same doctrine and practice are contained also in the language which the Church still uses in her solemn office of burial, calling

Martyrs or
other Saints
welcoming the
deceased to
heaven.

Magi with
monogram for
star.

¹ St. Maxim. Tur. Hom. lxxxi. p. 623, ed. 1784.



FIG. 68.—Fresco on Wall behind the Basilica of SS. Nerens and Achilleus.

upon the angels and martyrs to receive the departed soul, and "lead her into Paradise."

We have given so full a description of these paintings from the Cemetery of Cyriaca, that our readers will almost have lost sight of the point which they were first introduced to illustrate. We quoted them as one of the earliest examples we know of the Christian use of the nimbus, which we assign to the middle of the fourth century. But we cannot even yet take our leave of it till we have called attention to another of its details, which brings before us another feature of Christian art, which is characteristic of the fourth century. On the right-hand side of the outer surface of the arch there is a man clad in a short tunic, with a cloak fastened on the right shoulder, and a Phrygian cap on his head, in whom every archæologist will at once recognise one of the three wise men; and he is pointing to an object in the clouds, which we naturally expect to be the star, instead of which it is the monogram, enclosed within a circle. This is remarkable, not only as a signal proof of the symbolical, in opposition to the merely historical character of these paintings; but it also shows that this mystical interpretation extends further than we might have expected; further than we have seen in any of the examples hitherto adduced. Not only are the Old Testament histories types and figures of Christ and His Church; not only are the facts of the New Testament secret symbols of evangelical and apostolical doctrines; but (as we now learn) they were understood by the early Christians as also containing allusions to historical events recorded in ecclesiastical Annals. For here, under the veil of the history of the wise men who were led by a star, there is a manifest allusion to the vision of the monogram which appeared in the heavens to Constantine. No one can fail to recognise the appropriateness of the allusion, of the substitution of the name of Christ for the star; since Jesus Christ was Himself the Star foretold by the prophets, whose salutary light was sent to enlighten "the

Gospel facts treated as prophetic types of events in the history of the Church.

Bullettino,
1863, 79.

people that walked in darkness," and who "dwelt in the region of the shadow of death."¹ Hence we find in other monuments also, *e.g.*, in some of the sarcophagi in the south of France, the star represented in the form of a cross, more or less resembling the monogram. But this painting from the Catacomb of Cyriaca is, as far as we know, the earliest example of it.

Nimbus in a painting in San Callisto.

We come at last to the representation of the nimbus in the Catacomb of Callixtus which was so long since promised. It is to be seen at the back of the arched recess of an *arcosolium*.

Area xii. A. 9

The central figure is seated, with face turned, and hand outstretched towards a man standing on the right, and he too has



FIG. 69.—Arcosolium in Liberian region of St. Callixtus.

his arm extended as if in the act of speaking. Behind the central figure stands another, inclining towards him; and on the ground, at each side, is a chest full of volumes or scrolls.

This singular painting described, and a conjectural interpretation offered.

At first, whilst the painting was very indistinct, De Rossi thought he had before him one of the common representations of our Blessed Lady and the Divine Infant between two of the Magi; but when it had been carefully washed, it was clear that there was no trace of the Child, neither was the dress of the two men Oriental. Some persons still thought the central figure was of a woman, and conjectured that the scene repre-

R.S., iii. 251.

¹ Isaías ix. 2. St. Matt. iv. 14-16. St. Luke i. 78, 79.

sented might be the Annunciation, with the angel in front and one of the prophets behind. De Rossi, however, considers it certain that the sitting figure, distinguished by the nimbus, is meant for our Lord, and bearing in mind the painting which we just now described from the Catacomb of St. Cyriaca, he was disposed to see in it a representation of Christ judging, or rather accepting the soul brought before Him, whilst the figure behind might be one of the holy martyrs, of whom the ancient Christians believed that they "fulfilled the office of advocates with God and Christ."¹

But, on further consideration, it is clear that the man who stands in front is not praying, but speaking familiarly, or haranguing. Is he also then another advocate, and are the two praying figures, who are painted on the sides of the *arcosolium*, the deceased persons for whom both are pleading? But if so, we cannot understand the partial attitude of the Saviour; neither has the artist given any hint of a relation between the figure of Christ and those of the *oranti*. Baffled, therefore, in this attempt at an interpretation, De Rossi next turned his attention to the two chests of volumes on the ground. Objects of this kind in the paintings of the Catacombs usually denote the Holy Scriptures. Was it intended here to represent the Old and New Testaments respectively, and are the two figures a prophet and an apostle? the one standing behind Christ, as having foretold His coming, now obliterated as it were by His presence, whilst Christ turns towards the other, as being in so much more intimate relations with him, having lived and conversed with Him, and the Gospels containing the very record of His life? This is not the usual way in which our Lord is represented among His Apostles or Evangelists; and De Rossi hesitates, therefore, before the novelty of the scene and of its interpretation. He is unable however to suggest any other more probable interpretation, and he commends the subject to the further

¹ See Vol. I. p. 370.

study of the learned, only adding that its poverty of style as well as its ornaments assign it to a late period of the fourth century.

R.S., iii. 251.

There is nothing very remarkable in the other decorations of this *arcosolium*. The front of its lowest part, *i.e.*, the front of what may more strictly be called the grave, is covered with a representation of trellis-work. In the centre of the vault, above the grave, is a large bust, apparently of our Lord; the head, rather of a conventional type and approximating to what was afterwards called the Byzantine style, is surrounded with a nimbus; and at the two ends are women in prayer. These are clad in ash-coloured dalmatics, striped with black, and wear an ample veil over the head, which falls down behind their backs, and is ornamented towards the extremities with *callicula*. One of these ladies stands near a tree, and at her feet lies an open book, its two pages covered with words written in a running hand, which it is unfortunately impossible to decipher.

The *orante*
the only primi-
tive symbol
retained here.

This figure of the *orante* is almost the only really primitive symbol which maintains its place among the decorations of this area. Even the typical figures or events of the patriarchal or Jewish dispensations, which foreshadowed the doctrines and Sacraments of the new law, are rarely represented here. It is doubtful whether there is a single representation of the Good Shepherd; there is one stiff figure of Moses striking the rock, and one of Adam and Eve after the Fall; but, for the most part, the ornamentation consists of nothing more than bands or squares of colour, large roses, festoons of fruit or flowers, and (in one instance) a large bird with outstretched wings.

Peculiar orna-
mentation of
some tombs in
St. Soteris'.
R.S., iii. 80.

Of two or three of the *arcosolia*, the style of ornamentation is very peculiar. The ground is all red; and upon this the figures are traced in black and white, making them (says De Rossi) look like ghosts moving amid an atmosphere of fire. This singular effect is very appropriate in the representation

of the Three Children in the fiery furnace, which has been treated in this way; and especially in the shadowy outline (in white) which is here added, of a fourth figure—Him whom Nabuchodonosor saw “walking in the midst of the fire,” and whose form, he said, “was like the Son of God,” but of whom the inspired writer tells us that he was “the Angel of the Lord.”¹ This is a very unusual addition to the ancient paintings of this history; but there is another example in a painting of the Catacomb of St. Hermes, and it occurs also in the sculpture of some sarcophagi. Other subjects which completed the decoration of this *arcosolium* were the resurrection of

The Three Children, accompanied by the Angel of the Lord.



FIG. 70.—*The Three Children in the Fiery Furnace, and the Angel of the Lord.*

Lazarus (with the very unusual addition of two of the Apostles accompanying our Lord), Jonas, and (apparently) the occupant of the grave, of whom we learn from the Greek inscription, painted in white on the red ground, that she was one of the faithful, named Margaret, the only child of Asterius.

ΜΑΡΤΑΡΙΟΝ Η ΜΙΚΤΗ ΜΟΝΟΓΕΝΗΚ ΑΓΓΕΛΟΥ.²

The only chamber of the area which is painted throughout has its ceiling coloured in monochrome (dark blue), a mode of decoration of which there is no other example in the whole

¹ Daniel iii. 49, 92.

² The small letters are conjectural emendations by De Rossi.

cemetery ; and its walls are scored by red and dark bands and squares on a white ground. On the outside, over the doorway, there are three squares, of which the centre is occupied by two sheep, and those on either side by two birds, with some bush or plant between them. The plant between the two sheep is of a very peculiar kind, consisting of a very short stem, only just rising above the animals' heads, and then shooting out thick branches horizontally. At first sight, it suggests the same idea as we have already seen in Fig. 51,¹ a disguised cross. Indeed, it can hardly be said to be disguised, and perhaps the artist intended to represent the faithful gathered in this life around the standard of the cross, and dwelling under the shadow of its protection ; whilst in the birds on either side he exhibits the same souls released from the bonds of the flesh, and entered into the enjoyment of everlasting bliss in the garden of Paradise, near the mystical tree of life.² If this were so, it would be an interesting example of the steady continuance, from age to age, of one of the earliest elements of the symbolism of Christian art ; for this is the sense in which we interpreted the sheep and birds which we found placed opposite to one another in the crypts of Lucina.³ We should hardly have suggested such an interpretation of so late a painting as this, had not the painting been manifestly superior to all the other decorations of the Liberian area, better in design, and executed on better material. It was clearly the work of another hand—one might almost say of another school of art : such, at least, is the judgment of De Rossi ; and it is quite possible that the artist may have been one whose taste led him to cling to the traditions of his predecessors at a time when they were generally forsaken.

Ornaments by various patterns in different colours.

It is not worth while to give specimens of the ordinary patterns of red bands and squares on a white ground, which formed the most common decoration of the tombs in this area. We make one exception only in favour of the pattern

¹ See page 165.

² Apocalypse xxii. 2.

³ See pp. 53, 54.

of floriated Greek crosses (yellow on a white ground) which decorated the roof of the chamber in which Redemptus and other deacons were buried.¹ This partiality for the form of the cross is very characteristic of the age to which the chapel belongs. We must not conclude, however, that it was altogether peculiar to the age, nor even that it was any necessary token of a profession of the Christian faith. Something of the same kind may be seen in the tessellated pavements and other

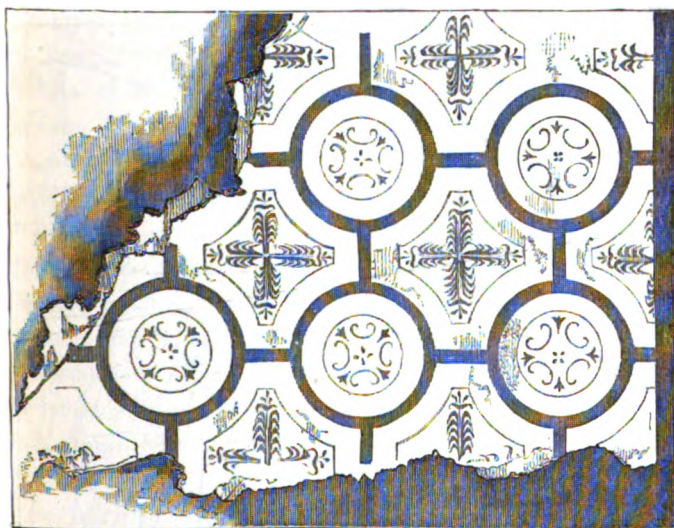


FIG. 71.—*Specimen of Ceiling with floriated Crosses.*

ornamental work of various buildings, both public and private, belonging to the Imperial period. And in Christian paintings of this date the cross, as we have already seen, was no longer disguised, but rather raised aloft as the *Labarum*, the standard of an army, and a pledge and record of victory.

Indeed, the dominant idea of this period of Christian art is one of triumph, the expansion and victorious progress of the one true faith, whereas the characteristic of the preceding ages

¹ See Vol. I., pp. 164, 368.

had been rather of peace amid combats, joy amid trials, safety in the midst of dangers. In the earlier ages, the Christian suffered, prayed, and was often delivered ; now he reigns triumphant, and begins to assume the outward emblems of victory. We have seen this in the use of the nimbus and the exaltation of

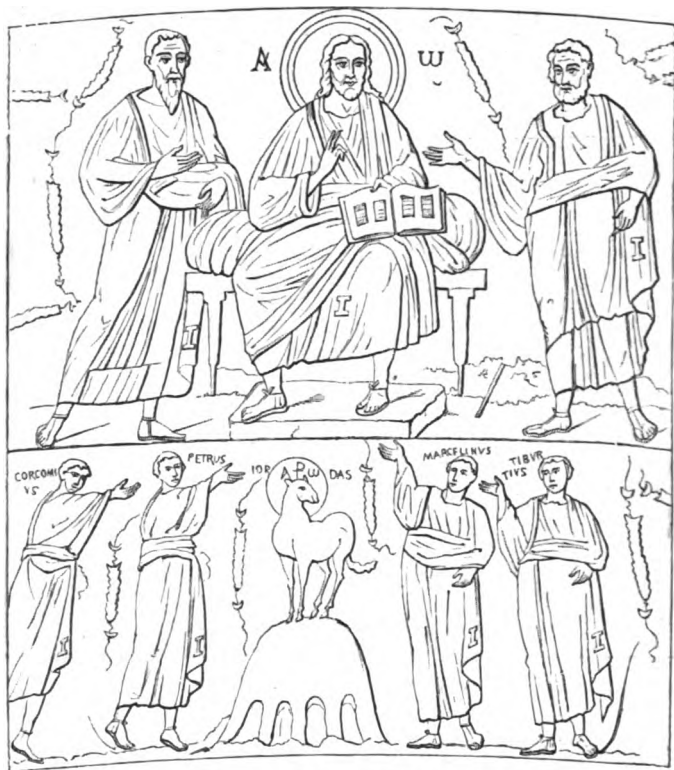


FIG. 72.—Painting of the Fourth or Fifth Century, from the Catacomb of SS. Peter and Marcellinus.

the cross. It is apparent also in the representations of Christ, who now stands upon a mountain, the mountain whence He ascended into heaven, “leading captivity captive ;” or Mount Sion, which is the Church ; that mountain which Daniel saw in vision “filling up the whole earth.”¹ And four rivers burst

¹ Daniel ii. 35.

Christ
sitting on a
mountain.

forth from the side of this mountain, like the four rivers of Paradise, the waters of Divine grace and truth, opened by the four Evangelists and the Apostles, “whose sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the whole world.”¹ Christ Himself is no longer represented under the generic symbol of a shepherd, but as a separate figure, or surrounded by a certain cortège of honour, evidently conceived with a view to His personal glorification. Hence the Saints participate with Christ in His glory, more especially St. Peter and St. Paul, as the chief of the Apostles, and representing the whole Church, both Jews and Gentiles. We shall see this very clearly expressed in one of the gilded glasses which belongs to this century, in which the two Apostles, and the very names of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, appear in this sense. In the Catacomb of Pretextatus, a painting of about the same date gives us *Petrus* and *Paulus* and *Sustus*, or Sixtus, the Pope who had been martyred in this cemetery. They are all without the nimbus, as they are also on the glass which has been mentioned. In the figure which we have given on the opposite page, but which is of a somewhat later date (from the Catacomb of SS. Peter and Marcellinus), the heads of our Lord and of the lamb, which is His symbol, are surrounded with the nimbus, but not so any of the Saints who are in His company.

Bullettino,
1867, 59, 86
1872, 63.

¹ Romans x. 18.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIFTH AND FOLLOWING CENTURIES.

*Paintings in the Catacombs in the fifth and sixth centuries extremely rare—
An example or two given—A specimen of the seventh century from
Cemetery of Generosa—And of the ninth from San Callisto—Portraits
of our Blessed Lord—Conclusion.*

Very few
paintings in
the Catacombs
of the fifth or
sixth centuries.

THE end of the fourth century brings us within a very few years of the close of the Catacombs as the ordinary burial-place of the Roman Christians; and even had it been otherwise, the social and political condition of the city after its capture by Alaric would have forbidden us to hope for any successful cultivation of the fine arts during the succeeding years. It is probable that very few paintings indeed were executed in the Catacombs in the fifth and sixth centuries; certainly none that deserve detailed examination, whether for choice of subject or style of execution.

The latest painting which De Rossi has found in the Cemetery of Callixtus, that was executed contemporaneously with the original excavation, belongs either to the very end of the fourth, or beginning of the fifth century; and although two-thirds of it have perished, it is still possible to recognise the subjects, and to see in the largest of the fragments which remain, unequivocal tokens of an approximation to what we are accustomed to call the Byzantine style. These may be seen in the almost geometrical precision of the arrangement of the hair on our Lord's head (which however is without a nimbus), as He stands before two baskets of bread, stretching forth towards them the rod of His power; and again, as He

R.S., iii. 77, 84.

touches the corpse of Lazarus with the same rod. The painting on the other side, of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, was evidently the sacrifice of Isaac, though nothing now remains of it but the uplifted knife in the hand of Abraham. These paintings ornament an *arcosolium*; and in their combination they present a dogmatic synthesis of the very same doctrines that we have found so often repeated, the sacrifice of Christ (whether on Mount Calvary or in the Mass), the Eucharistic Bread, and the Resurrection. They still retain a remembrance of the ancient symbolism; but this is the last

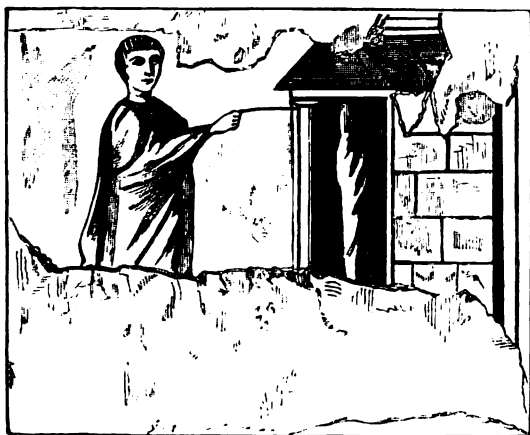


FIG. 73.—*Resurrection of Lazarus—beginning of fifth century.*

time that we shall meet with it. Both the taste for this kind of ornament and the knowledge of its meaning was rapidly declining, and the use of paintings of a more plain and positive character came into fashion even in the fourth century, and still more exclusively in the fifth.

A letter addressed by Olympiodorus to St. Nilus, disciple of St. Chrysostom,¹ tells us that the walls of the Basilicas in the fifth century were covered with representations of different animals, and of scenes taken from fishing and the chase. And

Bullettino,
1878, 152.

¹ Act. Conc. Nicæn. Labbe. tom. viii. 875.

the Saint having been asked his opinion upon this practice, severely censures such childish and unmeaning decorations as substitutes for the older and better fashion of depicting scenes from the Old and New Testaments.



FIG. 74.—*Three Saints painted in Shaft of the Crypt of St. Cecilia, in fifth century.*

The only other paintings in the Catacombs which we find attributed by De Rossi to the fifth century are of the plainest and most literal kind. There are some tokens of a second series of decorations of the Papal crypt, which may have been the work

of Pope Sixtus III.;¹ but the only part of it which can now be recognised is a very large Constantinian monogram in the arch of the doorway. And in the shaft which gave light and air to the adjoining crypt of St. Cecilia, appear the figures of three saints with their names over their heads, and a palm (or, according to Garrucci, three palms) by their side, to denote the fact of their martyrdom; and we have seen the reasons which probably led to their being represented at this time and in this place.² Higher up in the same shaft is a plain



FIG. 75.—Fresco of St. Cecilia on the Wall of her Crypt.

Latin Cross between two sheep; and above that again, a woman (perhaps St. Cecilia) in prayer. On the wall of the crypt, and close to the tomb of the Saint, there is another painting of her, but this is of a much later date. At the time that the figures of the Saints were executed in the *luminare*, the tomb of St. Cecilia was ornamented with mosaic work, the pattern of which can no longer be recognised.

¹ See Part I. p. 393.

² See Part I. p. 332.

It does not, however, enter into the plan of this work to write the history of Christian art from its beginning down to the final abandonment of the Catacombs in the ninth and tenth centuries. We have traced it as fully as we can during the period that they were in use for purposes of burial ; but we cannot pursue the subject with the same minuteness of detail through four or five succeeding centuries, during which they were frequented only from motives of devotion. It has been already mentioned that certain historical crypts (crypts, that is, in which famous martyrs were buried) continually received new decorations, according as the devotion of succeeding Popes or the ravages of time invited or necessitated this work of restoration. But of these we can only notice three or four ; chiefly those to which reference has been made in earlier portions of this work.

A painting of the seventh century from the Catacomb of Generosa.

The most ancient specimen of these later decorations is that which was given in our first volume from the Cemetery of Generosa, and seems to have been executed in the seventh century, about the time when the bodies of the Saints which it commemorates were translated into Rome. In it Christ stands between four Saints. His right hand is raised in the act of giving His blessing according to the Greek form of benediction ; the thumb and forefinger united, and the second and third fingers extended ; and in His left hand He holds a book (of the Gospels) studded with gems.

He is clad in the tunic and *pallium*, and the cruciform nimbus appears at the back of His head. The nimbus behind the heads of the four Saints is quite plain ; and they are clothed in the ancient style, in white tunics, ornamented with stripes of purple and pale gold, and even this gold has purple *calliculae* upon it. The dress of one of the men is more highly ornamented than that of the others ; and that of the lady is richer still. She has rings in her ears and jewels among her hair ; the borders of her gold dalmatic, both round the neck, the wrists, and towards the feet, are broad stripes of purple,

Bullettino,
1869, 29.



FIG. 76.—Fresco in Cuviculum behind the Basilica at the Cemetery of Genes.

powdered with rubies and pearls, and a very large and handsome brooch of the same kind is fastened on each shoulder.

Of the eighth century we do not know any specimens of painting that can be seen in the Catacombs. Some were discovered in 1702 on the walls of a buried church near the Tor di Specchi within the city, but they have been long since lost sight of again. According to the report of one who saw them at the time of their discovery, they consisted of a crucifixion, and of many figures of Saints, amongst which was the figure of Paul I. with the square nimbus, showing that he was still alive, and with the legend, *Sanctiss. Paulus Romanus Papa*; and on the side walls were scenes from the life of our Lord, manifestly painted over older and better pictures.

Bullettino,
1868, 16.

A painting of
the ninth
century from
the tomb of
St. Cornelius.

This same legend of *Papa Romanus*, or its equivalent $\overline{\text{PP}} \overline{\text{ROM}}$ or $\overline{\text{PP}} \overline{\text{R}}$, is what we find also on the paintings of St. Cornelius and of St. Sixtus, executed in the very first years of the ninth century near the tomb of the first-mentioned Pope. A chromo-lithograph of the figures of St. Cornelius and St. Cyprian has been given in Plate XI. of our first volume, and a slight sketch of that of St. Sixtus may be seen in Plate X. We here give another sketch of St. Sixtus and his companion—probably St. Optatus¹—on a larger scale, showing the legend from Holy Scripture which runs round the framework of the picture—a practice of which this is, as far as we know, the earliest example. It has been already pointed out that the words are taken from the old version of Psalm lviii., verse 17; *Ego autem cantabo virtutem Tuam et exaltabo misericordiam Tuam quia factus es et susceptor meus*, “I will sing of Thy strength and extol Thy mercy, for Thou art become my support;” and that they might most appropriately have expressed the personal experience of Pope Leo III., of whom it is recorded in the *Liber Pontificalis* that he did certain works of restoration in this cemetery and to whom we therefore attribute this painting.

R.S., i. 299.

¹ See Part I. p. 361.



FIG. 77.—Paintings of St. Sixtus and another Bishop near the Tomb of St. Cornelius (probably of the ninth century).

Others in the
Catacomb of
Pontianus.

Bullettino,
1869, 72.

The paintings of SS. Abdon and Sennen in the Catacomb of Pontianus, between the Porta Portese and the Porta di San Pancrazio, belong to a somewhat later date, and there are others of a similar kind in a Catacomb at Albano. We give here the bust of our Lord from the Roman Catacomb for the sake of the inscription below it, which records at whose expense the painting was made—a circumstance we do not remember



FIG. 78.—Bust of our Lord in the Catacomb of Pontianus, of the Ninth Century.

to have met with at any earlier date. “Gaudiosus made it,” or caused it to be made, “out of the gifts of God,” *i.e.*, out of the means with which God had blessed him.

Bullettino,
1878, 160.

The phrase *de donis Dei* occurs in the prayer of oblation in the most ancient Liturgies and is still retained there (*de Tuis donis ac datis offerimus Tibi hæc dona, &c.*); but it is in truth more ancient than Christianity itself; for we find the idea fully developed in a hymn of Philo Judæus, which runs as

follows; "We offer the first fruits of the earth to Thee Who art Thyself the Author of the benefit, if indeed he can rightly be said to offer who himself receives; for these all are Thy gifts and presents."¹ When offerings were made in honour of the Saints, their names were often coupled with that of God as the authors or givers of the temporal goods out of which the offering was made (*de donis Dei et Sanctorum*). And so over the heads of four Saints (two of whom were Abdon and Sennen) painted on this same wall, the legend runs, "DE DONIS DI ET SCRUM ABDON . . ." It seems tolerably certain that the names of the Saints were coupled with that of God in the same way in the Albano painting, though too many of the words have perished to allow us to say so with confidence.

Many of our readers will be familiar with the form of legend used in the paintings in the lately-recovered subterranean Church of St. Clement.

EGO BENO DE RAPIZA CU MARIA UXORE MEA P. AMORE DI
ET BEATI CLEMENTIS P. G. R. F. C.²

"I, Beno de Rapiza, with Mary my wife, for the love of God and of Blessed Clement, have caused this to be made for a favour received."

And

EGO MARIA MACELLARIA P. TIMORE DEI ET REMEDIO ANIME
MEE HEC P. G. R. F. C.

"I, Mary the victualler's wife, for the fear of God and for the healing of my own soul, have caused this to be made for a favour received."

The picture of our Lord which we have just given from the Catacomb of Pontianus suggests to us that we ought to say a few words, before we take our leave of the paintings in the Catacombs, on the subject of these portraits of Christ. It

Portraits of
Christ.

¹ Phil. Jud. *De Cophini festo*, &c., ed. Mai. 1818, p. 5. Compare 1 Paralip. xxix. 16: "O Lord, our God, all this store that we have prepared to build Thee a House for Thy holy Name is from Thy hand, and all things are Thine."

² Pro gratiâ receptâ fieri curavi.

will be obvious to all our readers that the more ancient frescoes which represent Him as the Good Shepherd, or in the act of performing some miracle, aimed only at reproducing the fact or the symbol which was needed to express the desired idea. There is no trace in them of any intention to give a portrait. The Gnostics had claimed to be in possession of such a portrait in very early times, a veritable likeness "made by order of Pilate, when Jesus lived among men;" but St. Irenæus¹ does not speak of these portraits with any respect; neither is there any evidence that the faithful claimed to be possessed of a similar treasure. On the contrary, St. Augustine says distinctly,² that "we picture to ourselves the likeness of our Blessed Lord as He appeared in the flesh, each one according to his own imagination; but yet, whatever that appearance was, it can only have been one." And he adds, "Neither do we know the face of the Virgin Mary, nor what were the features of Lazarus," &c. When, therefore, St. Basil writes to Julian,³ that "He invokes the holy apostles, prophets, and martyrs, as intercessors with God, and honours and reverences the impressions of their likenesses, handed down to us from the holy apostles," we understand him to claim apostolic antiquity not for any particular portrait, but for the doctrine and practice of invoking the saints and venerating their images.

Written descriptions of our Lord's personal appearance.

Perhaps the oldest written description of our Lord's personal appearance is that which occurs in the letter addressed to the Iconoclast Emperor, Theophilus, in the ninth century—a letter which has sometimes been attributed to St. John Damascene, and printed in the Appendix to his works, but which is now generally acknowledged to have been the joint production of the patriarchs of Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem, or at least to have been composed by one of those

¹ C. Hæres. lib. i. 25, 6.

² De Trinit. viii. 5. tom. viii. p. 1326, ed. Gaume.

³ Epist. cclx. tom. iii. p. 674, ed. Gaume.

patriarchs and adopted by the others. In this letter it is asserted that Constantine caused a likeness of our Lord to be painted "according to the description which had been handed down by historians ;" and this description contains the following details : that He was "tall in figure, with beautiful eyes, eyebrows meeting, a correct nose, curly hair, good fair complexion, and a dark beard." Nicephorus Callixtus, writing five centuries later, and professing in like manner to give the traditional portrait, agrees with this in many particulars. He speaks of His height, "His agreeable complexion, His golden hair, long, but not very thick, and slightly curling ; dark, straight eyebrows, long nose, bright eyes, and face neither round nor sharp, but oval, and moderately ruddy." To these we may add the description given in the so-called letter of Lentulus to the Roman Senate, which says that He was "tall and well proportioned in stature ; of a countenance full of force and gravity, such as moved spectators both to love and fear. His hair was auburn and glossy, and it flowed down upon His shoulders, curly, and parted in the middle, after the manner of the Nazarenes." The forehead is described as "smooth and very serene ; the countenance without line or spot, of a pleasant colour ; the general appearance open and pleasing ; the nose and mouth faultless ; the beard thick, of the same colour as the hair, and divided ; eyes light in colour, and extremely bright."

Of course these descriptions are not produced here as having any claim to be considered authentic or contemporary portraits, but we have thought it worth while to quote them for the sake of setting by their side Kügler's account of a painting in the Catacombs which he supposed to be the most ancient portrait of Christ in existence, and which even De Rossi and other competent critics at the present day still assign to the third century. Of this portrait Kügler says, "The face is oval, with a straight nose, arched eyebrows, a smooth and rather high forehead, the expression serious and mild ; the hair, parted on

Portrait of
Christ in the
Catacombs of
third century.

the forehead, flows in long curls down the shoulders ; the beard is not thick, but short and divided ; the age between thirty and forty."

It cannot be denied that there is a strong general resemblance between this description of what K  gler actually saw, and that given on traditional hearsay by the ancient writers



FIG. 79.—*The earliest Portrait of Christ, from a Ceiling in Catacomb of Domitilla*
(K  gler's *Schools of Painting in Italy*, Part I. p. 15, ed. 1851)

whom we have quoted. Hence we are not at all surprised at the eagerness with which strangers visiting the Catacombs inquire after this portrait. For the most part, however, they seek it where it is not to be found, in the Cemetery of Calixtus. It really exists in the Cemetery of Domitilla, in the

same chamber in which there is the representation of Orpheus and his lyre. In its present condition, however, it is impossible to recognise the details mentioned by K ugler. It is a painting of great interest and importance, as being the only one of its kind that we are acquainted with, prior to the age of Constantine; it is, however, at present terribly defaced, and some of its distinctive features are almost obliterated.



FIG. 80.—*The same Portrait, as copied by Mr. Heaphy, and to be published in his forthcoming work on "The Antiquity of the Likeness of our Blessed Lord."*

We produce two copies of it, the one taken from K ugler's "History of Art," the other from an original drawing by the late Mr. Thomas Heaphy. We are indebted for this last to the kindness of Messrs. Hardwicke & Bogue, who are about to publish a very important work by the author we have just

named, on the authenticity of the ancient portraits of our Lord. There is something so striking and sacred about the face, as represented by Mr. Heaphy, that we are hardly surprised at an art-critic expressing his conviction that "it was painted by one who had himself seen Christ."¹ Nevertheless, a comparison of the two drawings will satisfy our readers that they cannot really be depended upon as faithful reproductions of the original. In our own careful examination of the fresco, we entirely failed to gain any clear view of the features; and the Count de St. Laurent, who spared no pains to make his work as perfect as possible, declares that in its present condition it is impossible to distinguish them.²

Another portrait in sculpture.

The only other ancient representation of our Blessed Lord that still exists, which deserves to be classed with this either in point of character or of antiquity, is in sculpture, not in painting. It is carved at the end of a sarcophagus of the fourth century, which stands in the Christian Museum at the Lateran. Our copy of it is taken from De Laurent's "Guide to Christian Art,"³ which agrees with that given by another artist in Garrucci's "History of Christian Art." Nobody can have any doubt as to the subject here represented; it is the same as we have seen painted at a much earlier date in a *cubiculum* of the Cemetery of Pretextatus, the healing of the woman afflicted with the issue of blood, by touching the hem of our Lord's garment. The attitude of the figures, however, and the accessories of the representation, deserve careful attention. Our Lord is not here the young and beardless man ordinarily represented in the sculpture of sarcophagi. His features are of a very marked character, and remind us in many ways of the descriptions we have read by Nicephorus and others. But the grouping of the whole scene reminds us still more closely of the statue which Eusebius tells us⁴ was set up by the grateful famous

¹ Mr. Wyke Bayliss, F.S.A., in his *Witness of Art; or, The Legend of Beauty*. 2d edition, p. 179.

² *Guide de l'Art Chrétien*, tom. ii. p. 236.

³ Vol. ii. pl. i.

⁴ H. E. vii. 18. A woodcut of the front of this Sarcophagus will be given in Book IV.

Hæmorrhœissa herself at the doors of her house in Paneas (or Cæsarea Philippi) as an everlasting token of gratitude for the wonderful favour which she had received. He says that the



FIG. 81.—*Our Lord and the Hæmorrhœissa, on a Sarcophagus of the Fourth Century.*

group “was placed on a high pedestal, and that it consisted of the figure of the woman on her knees, with her hands stretched forward, like to a person petitioning for something ; that, oppo-

site to this, there was the upright figure of a man wrought in the same material; that the man was clad in a cloak, gracefully thrown round him, and that he is stretching forth his hand towards the woman. At his feet there grows upon this pedestal a strange kind of herb, which, springing up as far as the hem of his bronze cloak, is a cure for all kinds of diseases. They say that this image represents the likeness of Jesus. And it has remained even to our own days, so that the people who dwell in that city have seen these things." Eusebius goes on to remark that it is not to be wondered at that persons from among the Gentiles, who were formerly benefited by our Saviour, should have done this, since he had himself known likenesses of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and of Christ Himself, painted in colours, to have been preserved to his own time, and that these were probably made because the ancients were accustomed to honour their benefactors in this way.

The agreement between the description by the historian and the figures on the sarcophagus is striking, and suggests the idea that the Roman artist designedly copied the Eastern original. The introduction of buildings instead of persons into the background of the scene may be mentioned as a circumstance which tends to corroborate this conjecture, for we do not pretend to offer it as anything more, though at the same time we think it may fairly claim to be more reasonable than the objections which have been raised against the authenticity of Eusebius' narrative.

Ivory medal-
lion of Christ.

The gilded glasses found in the Catacombs never give any characteristic figure of Christ, such as could be mistaken for a personal portrait, but that which is carved on an ivory medallion preserved in the Christian Museum at the Vatican,¹ to which De Rossi is disposed to attribute very high antiquity, bears a certain resemblance to the face described by K ugler as represented in the fresco in the Cemetery of Domitilla; and it seems to have been followed more or less faithfully in the

¹ For this medallion see Book V., chap. 2, sect. 4, 5.

mosaics of Rome and Ravenna, and lasted even through the whole Byzantine period, until it finally received new life and beauty at the hands of Giotto and his disciples. Our readers have seen a specimen of the fifth century taken from the Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus. This figure is no longer a mere bust as in Domitilla, but He sits enthroned in glory between the two Apostles, Peter and Paul; and in the lower level He appears again as the mystical Lamb, also standing,



FIG. 82.—Fresco of Bust of our Lord in the Crypt of St. Cecilia.

crowned with the nimbus, on the mountain whence flows in four streams the river Jordan, and associated with Him in glory are SS. Peter and Marcellinus, Gorgonius and Tiburtius.

We have seen also, in the first Part of our work, another painting from the Crypt of St. Cecilia, which De Rossi attributes to Pope Paschal, in the beginning of the ninth century; at least he is confident that it is not earlier. And to this we may add another from the Cemetery of Pontianus of a yet later date, and a third from the Catacombs of Naples. But in these

F.S., ii.
123, 360.

it was sought to give grandness and solemnity to the figure by colossal size rather than by force of expression, and the result is far from being satisfactory.

After what has been said, it is hardly necessary to add that we cannot at all agree with those writers who assert that "the evidence is overwhelming that the early Christians were not less careful to treasure the likeness of the Master than were

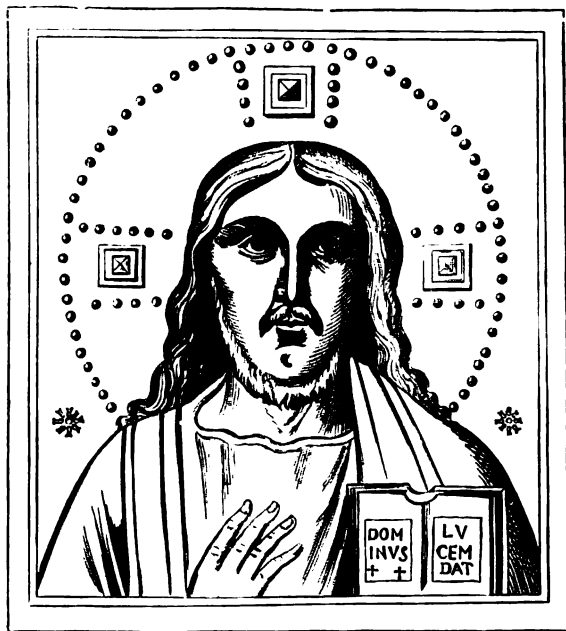


FIG. 83.—*Bust of Christ, from Catacomb of Pontianus. Bosio, p. 299.*

the Romans to keep the likeness of the Cæsar to whom He rendered tribute.”¹

No portraits of our Blessed Lady, nor of the Apostles, excepting SS. Peter and Paul.

If there are no genuine portraits of our Blessed Lord in the Catacombs, still less will our readers expect to find any

¹ The Witness of Art, by Wyke Bayliss, F.S.A., p. 179. Doubtless, the evidence referred to will be found in the work so long announced, but not yet published, on "The Antiquity of the Likeness of our Blessed Lord," by the late Thomas Heaphy, to be edited by Wyke Bayliss.

uniform representation of His holy Mother or His Apostles. Raoul Rochette, indeed, has said very positively¹ that there was no consecrated model in the first ages of the Church for the figures of any of these sacred objects of Christian devotion and worship. More recent discoveries and careful study of all existing monuments obliges us, as we shall presently see, to



FIG. 84.—*Bust of Christ, from the Neapolitan Catacombs.*

modify this statement with reference to the two Princes of the Apostles. It would have been strange if their disciples had not taken advantage of their long residence in Rome to possess themselves of authentic likenesses of men to whom they owed so much; but there had been no such opportunity with

¹ *Tableau des Catacombes*, p. 164.

reference to Christ and His Blessed Mother. We have already seen two of the earliest representations which the Catacombs give us of the Blessed Virgin; and we here set them before our readers again in a form which admits of their being easily compared. The first is from the Catacomb of Priscilla, and cannot be assigned to any later period than the first half of the second century; the other is only an enlarged reproduction of the central figure which may be seen with two Magi on either side of her, in page 170.



FIG. 85.—*The B. Virgin and Isaias, from Cemetery of Priscilla.*

In the Catacomb on the Via Nomentana, which goes by the name of St. Agnes, our Blessed Lady is painted in the lunette of an *arcosolium* with her arms outstretched in prayer, and the Divine Infant in front of her, quite unsupported. The monogram is on either side, and from both sides it is made to turn towards the centre. This sign is sometimes found in later paintings on the figures of saints, and may be understood to signify that they live in Christ; but more commonly it is

reserved to indicate the name and person of our Blessed Lord. Its presence here naturally directs our thoughts to the fourth century as the probable date of the work ; but as there is no



FIG. 86.—*The Blessed Virgin and Child, in Cemetery of Domitilla, of third century.*



FIG. 87.—*The Blessed Virgin and Child in the (so-called) Cemetery of St. Agnes, of the age of Constantine.*

nimbus round the head either of Christ or of His holy Mother, it is necessary to fix the earlier half of that century rather than

the later ; and De Rossi assigns it to the age of Constantine. The stamp of the ancient Greco-Roman artistic genius is not to be seen here ; neither, on the other hand, does it exhibit the characteristics of the Byzantine style. Its chief interest, perhaps, consists in the fact that the position of the Holy Child with reference to the Mother, which we see here for the first time, is one which has always been held in special favour in the Greek Church. It is to be seen on the seals of upwards of thirty convents on Mount Athos, all dedicated to the Blessed Virgin ; and remains to the present day a favourite Russian type of the Madonna, which they call *Zudmenskaia*.¹

But this is a subject we need not pursue any further. We have already reached the utmost limits of time during which there was any *cultus* or frequentation of the Roman Catacombs ; and it is in churches within the city, such as that of St. Clement, or in the illuminated MSS. of the old monasteries, that materials must be looked for to carry on the history of Christian Art through the few intervening centuries to the days of the Renaissance.²

These do not belong to our subject, and we must therefore now conclude this chronological arrangement of the paintings of the Catacombs, which, however imperfect it may be, is certainly more full and complete than any that has ever been made before. Indeed it would be more correct to say that this is the first time that the attempt has been made to draw up such a list at all. No doubt dates have often been assigned to particular paintings before, but not on any sound scientific principles, and the results were therefore most vague and often contradictory. Sarcophagi, for instance, were attributed to the second and third centuries by Settele and others, which we now know with certainty to have been long posterior

¹ See Didron, *Histoire de Dieu*, 267, fig. 73 ; Palmer's *Christian Symbolism*, p. 66.

² Part of this history will be found in M. Allard's new work, *L'Art Païen sous les Empereurs Chrétiens*. See Note E in Appendix.

to Constantine, whilst, contrariwise, Father Marchi, though his general tendency was to err in the opposite direction, yet believed that certain ornamentations in stucco, which are to be seen in some of the subterranean chapels, were executed when the age of persecution was ended, whereas they belong rather to an age when interference with the burial-places of the Christian dead had not yet been apprehended.

It has been already explained that the present arrangement is based in the main on the dates of the excavation of the several chambers or galleries in which the paintings occur, and that these dates are ascertained by a multitude of arguments from history, epigraphy, and an accurate comparative analysis of every part of the Catacombs. But the attentive reader cannot fail to have noticed how natural and probable a history of the development of Christian art has been thereby unconsciously, as it were, described. In the technical execution of the work, we have marked a steady continual decline from the first. The oldest paintings are indisputably the best. In their religious character, on the contrary, considered as compositions having a distinct Christian meaning, there was at first a continual sensible progress. In the most ancient paintings the general arrangement and the greater part of the ornamentation was Pagan; the central subject alone was Christian. As time went on, the unmeaning prettinesses of Pagan art were eliminated, and Christian symbols introduced in their stead. But the earliest cycle of Christian symbolism had reached its apogee, and was already declining before the latter half of the third century, the very period to which some of the best critics are wont to assign the decadence of art generally.¹

Development
of Christian
Art con-
tinuous.

Certainly after this date scarcely any new ideas were introduced, and Christian art was manifestly more hampered than before. At first there had been almost unlimited freedom in the choice of subjects; even scenes from the life of our

¹ Winckelmann, *Histoire de l'Art*, tom. ii. p. 488 (Paris, 1793); D'Agincourt, *Hist. de l'Art par les Mon.*, tom. iii. p. 50.

Blessed Lord were represented ; but by and by the necessity of cautious reserve was felt, and such representations dropped into disuse. Where there was danger of intrusion from the Pagan world without, nothing specially sacred was depicted. Birds, fruits, and flowers, and even figures from Pagan mythology, provided they were not really idolatrous (such as the fable of Psyche, for example), were used in preference to subjects more distinctively Christian. Biblical subjects continued to retain their place in the decoration of interior chambers, but in a more literal and historical form, and without any of those symbolical adjuncts which expressed so graphically Christian dogmas. These were seen in perfection in the sacramental chambers of San Callisto, which are as superior in their symbolism to the paintings in the sepulchre of the Flavii in the Catacomb of Domitilla, as they are inferior to them in all that concerns technical skill in beauty of design and correctness of execution.

R. S., i: 99, 196.

Bullettino,
1865, 98.

And we believe that generally throughout all the Catacombs, with a few possible exceptions perhaps, the mere artist would, by the history of his art, arrive at the same conclusion as to the chronological succession of the paintings as De Rossi has done on purely historical or topographical grounds, founded on an almost microscopic examination of every accessible corner of subterranean Rome. It is a very strong but wholly unforeseen confirmation of his judgment, to find that the successive variations of subject or style, which are thus attributed to the works of art of different periods, correspond both to the outward condition of the Church and to the natural progress of the mind, so that they might almost have been anticipated by one who was thoroughly familiar with all the Christian writings of the same periods. The historical sketch has not been suggested by any such anticipations, neither has it in any way been controlled by them ; yet it has been possible, almost throughout the entire sketch, so aptly to illustrate the paintings by the writings, that they must needs have seemed to all unprejudiced

persons a true reflection of the same outward circumstances, a faithful echo of the same doctrinal teaching and tradition.

Finally, it should be observed that each of the phases which Christian art went through, during the period that the Catacombs remained in use, was derived from its predecessor by a natural sequence of ideas. The roots of the later phase are, in every instance, buried in the earlier; and the earlier phase is still in process of dissolution, whilst the later is already germinating. Hence they are not separated from one another by strict chronological boundaries which are never transgressed.

It is easy to assign positive dates to specific facts; but ideas are subject in their growth and decay to the influence of local or other accidental circumstances which it is often difficult to trace. Although, therefore, we have perfect confidence in the general accuracy of the chronological sketch which has been here given, and although we believe that the characteristics of each successive period have been marked with sufficient distinctness to enable intelligent observers to determine, at least approximately, the age of any particular specimen of painting that may be brought before them from the Catacombs, yet we are far from saying that there is never any room for doubt and hesitation.



BOOK IV.

EARLY CHRISTIAN SCULPTURE.

CHAPTER I.

CHRISTIAN SARCOPHAGI.

Christian sculpture almost confined to sarcophagi—Christians used sarcophagi in Apostolic times—St. Petronilla—Reasons why Christian sculpture was rare in time of persecution—Christians selected unobjectionable subjects by Pagan sculptors—Pastoral scenes: Ulysses and Sirens, Orpheus, &c.—Sarcophagi in Lateran Museum—Explanation of large sarcophagus—Statues of Good Shepherd, Jonas, Noe, &c.—Cain and Abel—Sheep with bread—Labarum and scenes from Passion—Agape—Christ in glory—Elias—Nativity—Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, with allegorical figures of lambs—Statue of Hippolytus: his Paschal Canon.

Early Christian sculpture.

IT might have been supposed that early Christian sculpture would have sprung up and developed side by side with the sister art of painting; but we shall set forth reasons which sufficiently explain why this was not the case, and why distinctly Christian sculpture can hardly be said to have existed before the age of Constantine. The earliest specimens that have come down to us are the sculptures on Christian sarcophagi, and De Rossi promises us a work which shall contain representations and a full description of all the sarcophagi, and fragments of sarcophagi, that have been found in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus. The finest collection of Christian sarcophagi in the world is that in the Lateran Palace. It was commenced by Father Marchi in 1851, and additions have

been made from time to time under the direction of the Comendatore De Rossi. Before examining this interesting collection of early Christian sculpture, it is worth while to inquire into the Christian use of this mode of burial, in order that we may gain some general idea as to the date of the specimens before us.

The use of sarcophagi, or stone coffins, comes down from Sarcophagi the remotest Egyptian antiquity; and almost every museum contains specimens of Pagan Roman sarcophagi. This ancient mode of burial had almost ceased to be practised in the time of Augustus, and did not again become common among the Romans until the time of Hadrian and the Antonines, although the Scipios and other distinguished families buried their dead in sarcophagi; and Visconti and Cavedoni give examples of this mode of burial in the first century. Thus, Poppæa was buried, "not burned with fire, as is the Roman custom, but after the manner of foreign kings, embalmed with spices."¹ The Christians, who maintained that, in refusing to burn their dead, they followed the more ancient way, naturally made use of sarcophagi. We have seen that the Catacomb of Domitilla,² which bears every mark of having been constructed in the time of the Flavian emperors, appears originally to have been intended solely for the reception of those buried in sarcophagi. The *loculi*, cut through the plaster which covers the walls of the first portion of this cemetery, are manifestly later additions; while the wide recesses, in which the sarcophagi once stood, prove the original design of the sepulchre. Beneath the floor of the ambulatory have been found several sarcophagi made of terra-cotta of the finest workmanship, but these are nearly all of the second century. The earliest form of the *loculus* in this portion of the Catacomb is that in which the outside of the *loculus* is covered with fine white stucco, so as to give it the appearance of a real sarcophagus—De Rossi calls it a *loculo-sarcophago*. In this cemetery the body of St. Petronilla

used by Christians in Apostolic age.

Bullettino, 1865, 38. R.S., iii. 441.

¹ Tacit. Annal., xiv. 6.

² See Vol. I. p. 125.

Bullettino,
1878, 135, &c.

lay in a stone sarcophagus, in the Catacomb which was in the fourth century converted into the recently-discovered subterranean Basilica.¹ There the Saint was venerated with increasing devotion, especially by Pepin and Charlemagne in the eighth century, until the imperial mausoleum beside St. Peter's on the Vatican was prepared by Pope Stephen II., to which the remains of St. Petronilla, in the same sarcophagus, were translated by Paul I. with great solemnity. The kings of France regarded the spiritual daughter of St. Peter as the special patroness of the Carlovingian race, and in 1474 King Louis XI. restored the altar of this Saint. In consequence, the sarcophagus was exposed to view; and there is a letter of Pope Sixtus IV. to the king, in which he describes it as having four dolphins at the corners. The inscription,

AURELIAE PETRONILLAE FILIAE DVLCISSIMAE,

is said to have been engraven by the hand of St. Peter himself, whose daughter, in the Gospel, this Saint of Cæsar's household was. The sarcophagus of Linus, the immediate successor of St. Peter, is related by Severano to have been found in the time of Urban VIII., during the restoration of the Confession of St. Peter. The Christian use of sarcophagi, then, appears to have been coeval with the introduction of Christianity. There were, however, several reasons which made this mode of burial far from general among the Christians.

They were
not, however,
in very general
use.

In the first place, the sarcophagus was an expensive article, and the mass of the Christian community was composed of the poor. The conveyance of a heavy stone coffin from the city to the cemetery required the presence of a considerable number of workmen, and must have attracted more attention to the Christian cemeteries than was generally desirable. Consequently we find, at a very early period, the *sepulcro a mensa*, which is nothing else but a sarcophagus cut out of the living rock; and the later form of this kind of sepulchre was,

¹ See Vol. I. p. 183.

as we have seen, the *arcosolium*, which has been described as "an excavated sarcophagus, with arched niche above."

Even when the Christians did bury their dead in sarcophagi, they do not appear, until the ages of persecution had passed away, to have ornamented them with sculptures of a distinctive Christian character. Out of the four hundred and ninety-three dated inscriptions, described by De Rossi as belonging to the first four centuries, only eighteen are found on sarcophagi, and of these not more than four bear dates anterior to the time of Constantine. These are ornamented with genii, or griffins, or pastoral or hunting scenes; and the earliest dated sarcophagus, with a distinctively Christian subject sculptured upon it, is one from the Catacomb of SS. Peter and Marcellinus,

Christian subjects not sculptured on sarcophagi during ages of persecution.

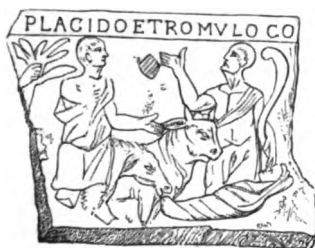


FIG. 88.—Fragment of dated Sarcophagus with Nativity.

upon which is represented the Nativity with the ox and ass, and which bears a consular date corresponding to A.D. 343.

This tardy development of Christian sculpture cannot be explained by the supposition that the Church forbade or discouraged the representation of sacred subjects and symbols, for if such had been the case, the same rule would have applied to painting, and we have seen that no restriction was placed upon the Christian artist even from the Apostolic age. A simple explanation of the contrast presented by these two branches of Christian art is to be found in the consideration of the widely-different circumstances under which the painter and the sculptor pursued their respective callings during times of persecution. The Christian artist, concealed in the bowels

Reason of this.

of the earth, prosecuted his labours without fear of danger ; while the sculptor would be unable to execute Christian subjects in his workshop without drawing a dangerous attention to his work.

Fabretti has given a drawing of a monument, the original of which is preserved at Urbino, on which is represented a Christian sculptor in the act of prosecuting his trade. Although the Christianity of Eutropus is proved by the dove with the olive branch, and the inscription " Holy, God-fearing Eutropus in Peace," put up to him by his son, yet neither on the sarcophagus that he is carving, nor on the small one by its side,



FIG. 89.—Tombstone of a Christian Sarcophagus-maker.

are there any distinctive symbols of Christianity. This monument is assigned by De Rossi to the third century.¹

We may, therefore, say generally that upon the sarcophagi, prior to the time of Constantine, we find Christianity, if represented at all, veiled under forms which were not unknown even to the Pagans ; while upon those belonging to the period which followed the peace of the Church, we notice at once the reproduction in marble of the same series of sacred subjects which we have seen reduced to a regular symbolical system in the subterranean fresco-paintings of the second and third centuries. In fact, no sooner was peace given to the Church than Christian art sprang up everywhere,

¹ See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, p. 171.

and sarcophagi of the fourth century, adorned with Christian sculptures, have been found in Arles¹ and Saragossa as freely as in Rome, Ravenna, or Milan. A few sarcophagi have been found at Spoleto, and De Rossi describes a very interesting fragment of one representing JESUS steering the mystic ship with MARCUS, LUCAS, and JOANNES, as rowers; and their names are carved so as to remove all doubt as to the signification. The missing portion doubtless bore the figure and name of the other evangelist, MATTHAEUS. *Bullettino*, 1871, 74.

There were also other difficulties in the way of the Christian sculptor. If he had been before his conversion a maker of idols, he was required, under pain of excommunication,² to give up his art "excepting only those things which are useful for man." The Acts of the *Quatuor Coronati*, whose martyrdom is celebrated on Nov. 8th, show the danger to which a Christian sculptor was exposed. These four sculptors were ordered to make basins for fountains ornamented with cupids and figures of Victory, about which they seem to have had no scruple. They also made an image of the Sun with a chariot and four horses. But when they were commanded to make an image of Æsculapius they refused and suffered martyrdom in consequence. A Christian who carried on the trade of a sculptor would live in constant danger of receiving commissions which would force him to declare his faith at the risk of his life. Dangers of a Christian sculptor. *R.S.*, iii. 579.

From the difficulties in the way of anything like the formation of a Christian school of sculpture during the ages of persecution, it is evident that those who wished to procure Subjects selected by Christians from the Pagan shops.

¹ A great number of Christian sarcophagi, discovered in the neighbourhood of Arles, may still be seen in the museum of that city. There appears to have been a very considerable school of Christian sculpture there. And on the corners of the sarcophagi, where the pagans placed masks (see p. 240), and the Roman Christians the heads of SS. Peter and Paul, these sculptors carved the head of a young beardless man, always the same. De Rossi thinks it is the patron of Arles, the youthful Genesis. *Bull.*, 1864, 46-48.

² See Const. Apost. viii. 32, and *Canones S. Hippolyti arabice*, can. xi.

sarcophagi must have had recourse to the shops of the heathen ; and an examination of the fragments which remain of these ages proves, that they took considerable pains to select those which did not directly offend against the Christian religion by representing idolatrous rites, or false gods, or scenes clearly peculiar to Paganism. Sarcophagi with such scenes sculptured upon them are sometimes indeed to be met with in the Cata-

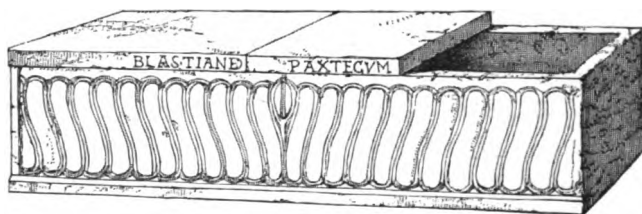


FIG. 90.—Very ancient Sarcophagus, found in Crypt of Lucina.

combs, but they have either been carefully defaced with a chisel, or turned against the wall ; and when used to close *loculi*, the sculpture has been turned towards the inside of the tomb. For instance, a bacchanalian scene sculptured on a sarcophagus was found in the Cemetery of Lucina, turned against the wall, while the rough side was exposed to view, and on this side was inscribed the name of the deceased, IRENE. The sarcophagi usually found in Christian cemeteries

R.S., i. 344.



FIG. 91.—Small Sarcophagus in St. Callistus.

Pastoral scenes.

R.S., i. 341.

are ornamented either by wave lines, or by scenes of pastoral life, agriculture, the chase, and (more rarely) comic figures.

The acclamation *Blastiane pax tecum* is regarded by De Rossi as a proof that this sarcophagus, found in the ambulatory V. of the area of Lucina, is of very ancient, if not of Apostolic date.

Fishes, and especially dolphins, are very common both on

Christian and Pagan sarcophagi. We have explained their Christian signification,¹ which was familiar to the friends of "Longianus, buried on the 6th of April," under the staircase B in the primary Area of St. Callixtus.

Figures with their hands raised in prayer, *oranti*, were not unknown on Pagan tombs. A shepherd with a sheep on his shoulders is also to be found among heathen subjects. These were at once expressive of thoroughly Christian ideas, and were consequently in great request, as the numerous examples of them testify. Sometimes, other subjects appear less susceptible of a Christian interpretation. Cupid and Psyche are represented side by side with a Good Shepherd, who is overturning a basket of fruit, an omen of evil rather

Good Shepherd with Cupid and Psyche.



FIG. 92.—Sarcophagus found among the ruins of an ancient chamber in St. Callixtus.

than good. It is, however, fair to add, that this sculpture was found with signs of plaster upon it, and had been buried beneath the floor of the chamber, indicated in plan as Q. Another, found in the crypt of Lucina, represents the story of Ulysses and the Sirens, and it is probable that the monogram of TYRANIO was a disguised form of the Cross. This is not the only instance of the representation of this fable on Christian tombs; and in the third century the author of the *Philosophumena* recommended the faithful to imitate Ulysses and his companions; "My advice to my readers is to adopt a similar expedient, viz., either on account of their infirmity to smear their ears with wax, and sail [straight on] through

R.S., ii. 169, 170.

Ulysses and Sirens.

R.S., i. 344.

¹ *Supra*, pp. 80, 81.

the tenets of the heretics, not even listening to [doctrines] that are easily capable of enticing them into pleasure, like the luscious lay of the Sirens, or, by binding oneself to the Tree of Christ, hearkening with fidelity [to His words], not to be distracted, inasmuch as he has reposed his trust in Him to whom ere this he has been firmly knit, and to continue



FIG. 93.—Sarcophagus in Crypt of Lucina.

steadfast.”¹ “Sail past the song,” says St. Clement of Alexandria,² “it works death. Exert your will only, and you have overcome ruin. Bound to the wood of the Cross, thou shalt be freed from destruction. The Word of God will be thy pilot, and the Holy Spirit will bring thee to anchor in the haven of heaven.” Both these fragments of sarcophagi may be seen in the Catacomb of St. Callixtus.



FIG. 94.—Sarcophagus still containing a body, in St. Callixtus.

The Good Shepherd at each end of one of the sarcophagi in that Catacomb, which still contains the well-preserved body of a man, was probably taken from the Pagan shops. The dog at his feet is foreign to Christian art. Yet the chamber was probably not made before the fourth century, and another

¹ Philosophum. vii. 1. Ante-Nicene Libr. p. 267.

² Clem. Alex. *Exhort. ad Gentes*. c. 12.

sarcophagus in it is covered with subjects wholly Biblical. Modern interpreters have seen in the two shepherds, one youthful and the other bearded, the types of Christ and St. Peter; and it is possible that the same idea may have recommended the sarcophagus to its Christian purchasers. In the Lateran Museum a fair specimen of a Pagan Good Shepherd, adapted to Christian purposes, may be seen about the middle of the hall, on the right-hand side. It is from the Cemetery of Priscilla, and is engraved in Aringhi.¹ It represents three shepherds, one holding a sheep by its tail, or perhaps milking it after the Italian mode; the second with a sheep on his



FIG. 95.—Part of Sarcophagus of Paulina.

shoulders and another at his feet, while the third leans on his staff and watches three sheep feeding on the mountain-side, a fourth lying at his feet. This sarcophagus bears the inscription:—

ΕΝΘΑΔΕ ΠΑΤΑΕΙΝΑ
ΚΕΙΤΑΙ ΜΑΚΑΡΩΝ
ΕΝΙ ΧΩΡΩ
ΗΝ ΚΗΔΕΤΣΕ ΠΑΚΑΤΑ
ΕΗΝ ΘΡΕΠΤΕΙΡΑΝ
ΓΑΤΚΕΡΗΝ
ΑΓΙΑΝ ΕΝ ΧΡΩ

“Here Paulina lies in the place of the blessed [martyrs] whom Pacata buried [for she was] her sweet and holy nurse in Christ.”

¹ Rom. Sott., ii, 123.

Bosio says that it was dug up out of the Cemetery of St. Priscilla on the Via Salaria, and he infers from the inscription that that cemetery was a celebrated resting-place of saints.¹ The sarcophagus, with Orpheus and a fisherman sculptured upon it, reminds us of the passage of St. Clement of Alexandria already quoted,² and which concludes: "Behold the might of the New Song! It has made men out of stones, men out of beasts. Those, moreover, that were as dead, not being partakers of the true life, have come to life again, simply by becoming listeners to this song."³ These last words, alluding to Eurydice, may have induced the bereaved Christian husband to purchase this sarcophagus for "*Furia, my sweet holy soul,*" as the inscription expresses it.

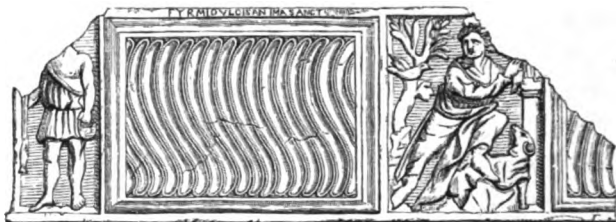


FIG. 96.—Part of Sarcophagus with Orpheus.

Sarcophagi in the Lateran. That nearest the entrance.

Since sculpture cannot be said to have existed as a Christian art before the time of Constantine, we may safely attribute nearly all the sarcophagi, with distinctively Christian subjects sculptured upon them, to the fourth and fifth centuries. They come from the cemeteries above ground, or from the basilicas and oratories erected in them.

Having thus determined an approximation to their date, we may pass on to examine some of the more remarkable specimens. We will commence with the large sarcophagus which stands at the end of the hall in the Lateran, and which is usually the first to attract the attention of visitors. A litho-

¹ Bosio, *Rom. Sott.*, p. 513.

² *Supra*, p. 32.

³ *Clem. Alex.*, vol. i., *A. N. Libr.* p. 120.

graph is given of it in Plate XXIII. This sarcophagus was recently found above the tomb of St. Paul, when the excavations were made for the construction of the magnificent Baldacchino which now covers the high altar in his basilica on the Via Ostiensis. That basilica was rebuilt by Theodosius towards the close of the fourth century, and this sarcophagus appears to have been placed there about that time. The unfinished faces of the busts in the centre, doubtless intended for the man and woman to be buried in it, and other heads in the same incomplete condition, show that some circumstance prevented the execution of the original design. It has been suggested that the invasion of the Goths under Alaric was the cause, and this would fix the date at A.D. 410.

In the interpretation of the symbolism of the Biblical subjects sculptured on this and other sarcophagi, we shall assume that our readers have accepted the principles laid down in Chapter III. of Book I., although it will be seen that certain subjects are very frequently met with in sculpture which rarely if ever appear in the Catacomb paintings. These will require more detailed treatment.

Symbolical
meaning of
Biblical
subjects.

Beginning at the right hand of the upper part of the sarcophagus, we have three bearded figures representing, by their unity of operation, the Three Persons of the Ever-Blessed Trinity. The Eternal Father, as the source and fountain of Deity, is symbolised by the figure in the chair, veiled, as the episcopal chair was, in token of His supreme dignity. In front of Him is a figure who represents the Eternal Word, by whom all things were made, in the act of creating Eve from the side of the sleeping Adam. Behind the seated figure stands a third, to represent the Holy Ghost, who co-operates in the work of creation.¹ In the next group we

The Holy
Trinity.

¹ This is the interpretation of Padre Marchi, and followed and defended by De Rossi (See *Bull.*, 1865, 68). P. Garrucci, however, maintains that the figure behind the chair is intended to represent God the Father, the seated figure, God the Son, and the figure bringing Eve out of Adam's side, God the Holy Ghost. Cardinal Franzelin adopts the same view

The Fall.

see the serpent with the fatal apple in his mouth, which he offers to our common mother, while between the guilty pair is our Lord, here represented without a beard, because it was in the depth of the shame of the fall that He was revealed as the promised Seed who should be born of the woman, and the Incarnation is expressed by the signs of youth. He gives to Adam a sheaf, for "in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread;" while to Eve he gives a lamb, a type of domestic labour in spinning, and also of the Lamb of God whom the second Eve was to bring forth to atone for all the evil that the first Eve had brought upon mankind.

The Epiphany.

Immediately below we see two other groups, evidently intended to contrast in some way with those already described. Here the Eternal Word is again represented, but this time not according to His Divine Nature by which He is co-equal with the Father, but He is the Word made flesh, an infant on His mother's knee. The Holy Ghost is represented just as before, for it was by the operation of the Holy Ghost that Mary conceived the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity in her virginal womb. Her chair is not veiled, to distinguish the most blessed of creatures from the unapproachable Creator; and to mark the twofold generation of Christ, that which is invisible, by which He was born of the Father before all worlds, and that which was made manifest, by which He was born of His mother in the world. The universality of His kingdom is typified by the three Magi, the representatives of the whole Gentile Church. And finally, the application of the universal redemption to the individual is set forth by Christ giving sight to the blind, while He holds in His hand a roll, either to signify His Divine mission, or to show that it is His doctrine which alone can enlighten the eyes of the darkened understandings of men.

Our Lord giving sight to the blind.

(*De Deo Trino*, Thesis xiii. p. 214). In a sarcophagus from the Cemetery of St. Agnes, a single figure seated on a veiled chair receives the offerings of Cain and Abel. If we are to assign this to either of the Three Persons it will of course be God the Father. (See engraving in Aringhi, R.S., ii. 73.)

Turning now to the upper portion of the other side of the sarcophagus, we see our Lord with the rod of His power changing the water into wine, and multiplying the loaves, the well-known patristic symbols of the Holy Eucharist, in which the wine becomes His blood, and the bread His flesh, which He gives for the life of the world. And then, as a type and foreshadowing of the power of the Holy Eucharist even upon the mortal body, according to the promise, "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day," we have a third group, mutilated indeed, but with enough remaining to show that it represents the raising of Lazarus. Eucharistic types.

Beneath this Eucharist series, as we may call it, we see St. Peter. Peter, having had already committed to him the rod of power, which our Lord held in the former series, and yet receiving from His Master the solemn warning, "Before the cock crow thou shalt deny Me thrice." The uplifted hand of our Lord, and the cock at St. Peter's feet, express this with sufficient clearness, while the rod in the Apostle's hand shows that his fall would not deprive him of his great prerogatives, but that, being converted, he should "confirm his brethren."

The next group represents the apprehension of St. Peter; the bearded face and general similarity of expression identify the Apostle, and distinguish him from his Divine Master. The Jewish caps mark the satellites of Herod Agrippa, and it is worthy of note that, though they have power to lead the Apostle whither he would not, yet he still retains the rod, for "the Word of God is not bound," and Imperial soldiers, who repeated the scene over and over again in the person of Peter's successors, have never been able to wrest from him the rod of power with which he rules the Church as Vicar of Christ.¹

¹ Paisius Ligarides, the worthless opponent of the Muscovite Patriarch Nikon, once a student at the Greek College in Rome, says, "There is an old tradition, that our Lord by His question to Peter thrice repeated

Another reason, which probably led to the very frequent representation of this scene in St. Peter's life, is that his imprisonment and miraculous deliverance was the immediate cause of his coming to Rome and founding the Church there ; and thus Roman Christians would see in the apprehension of St. Peter the symbol of "the Holy See of Blessed Peter, through which," in the words of St. Leo, Rome "was made a priestly and royal city, and the head of the world, extending her sway more widely by the religion of God than ever she had done by earthly domination."¹ The next group is a

Moses striking
the rock.

mutilated representation of Moses striking the rock, of the waters flowing, from which the people of Israel are drinking. We shall see that the glasses found in the Catacombs enable us to interpret this as a symbol of St. Peter, and in him the Christian priesthood, touching with the rod of power the Rock from which the spiritual Israel draw grace for all their needs.

The arrest of
St. Peter.

This interpretation is confirmed by a small sarcophagus, to be seen behind the statue of St. Hippolytus, at the end of the Hall. A photograph of it forms the frontispiece to this Volume, reproduced from one of the series of photographs executed by Mr. Parker's direction. That gentleman describes

meant to set him right of his former thrice-repeated denial, saying, "Peter, lovest thou Me?" and that as He said the words, "Feed My lambs," "Feed My sheep," He gave him a staff significative of pastoral authority. For as Moses, when constituted leader of the people of Israel received the staff of the patriarch Jacob, which had been inherited by his son Joseph, and after his death had been taken to Pharaoh's palace, and was given by the daughter of Pharaoh, the princess Thermoutis (wife of Thothmes), to Moses her adopted son ;—so Peter also, being put forward from all the sheep of the world, and at once appearing to be, and being called and indicated as the mouth of the whole choir of the Apostles, receives the charge of being leader of the flock, as Theophylact declares, in meet recompense for the ardour of his love. This staff of the Prince of the Apostles the Christians living at Antioch once upon a time having set up as a conquering standard against the Hagarenes, put to flight 40,000 of them" (Palmer's *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. iii. p. 109). Whatever may be thought of this tradition, it is a curious comment on the figures under consideration.

¹ Serm. i. in Nat. Apost. See Corn. à Lap. in Act. xii. 17.

it as "St. Peter striking the rock, and bringing out the Stream of Life, at which the faithful Jews are drinking. The arrest of St. Peter."¹

The remaining group, beneath the busts of the persons for whom the sarcophagus was intended, represents Daniel in the lions' den, protected by God under the figure of an old man, while the figure offering to Daniel a basket of food represents the prophet Habacuc, whom "the angel of the Lord took by the top of his head, . . . and set him in Babylon, over the den, in the force of His Spirit. Then Habacuc cried, saying: 'O Daniel, thou servant of God, take the dinner that God hath sent thee.'"² This group is met with very frequently both in painting and sculpture. It is found in the earliest-known Catacomb, and it may be seen in the subterranean church of San Clemente, among frescoes of the tenth century. The continuator of the *Liber Pontificalis* mentions Gregory IV. having adorned altar frontals with gilded representations of Daniel in the lions' den. The writings of the early Fathers inform us that the Christians saw in Daniel the type of the Christian martyr, sometimes like Daniel unharmed by the savage beast to which he was exposed in the arena, but always victorious over those who could at most only destroy the body, and consoled in the dungeon, in which he awaited his martyrdom, by the Christian priest who strengthened him for the conflict with the heavenly food of the Holy Eucharist. Thus St. Cyprian applies the history: "For since all things are God's, nothing will be wanting to him who possesses God, if God Himself be not wanting to him. Thus a meal was divinely provided for Daniel when he was shut up by the king's command in the den of lions; and in the midst of wild beasts who were hungry and yet spared him, the man of God was fed."³ That by this bread was understood the

Daniel among the lions.

Bullettino,
1865, 74.

¹ Sculpture, Plate XIX.

² Dan. xiv. 32-38. In the Protestant version it is called "The Story of Bel and the Dragon."

³ S. Cypr. De Oratione, 21.

Holy Eucharist is evident from a sarcophagus at Brescia, where Habacuc brings with the bread also the mystic Fish. De Rossi has seen the same addition in other sarcophagi.

Ancient Christian statues.

On either side of this sarcophagus are two small statues of the Good Shepherd.¹ Besides these two statues a third has been found by F. Mullooly in San Clemente, and a fourth is preserved in the Kircherian Museum. A bust of our Saviour was found among the ruins of the tomb of St. Helena. The Museum of the Duke of Medina-Coeli in Seville, possesses a statue of the Good Shepherd; and a statuette in white marble about twenty inches high, which De Rossi believes to belong to the third century, is preserved in the Old Seraglio, on the site of the Church of St. Irene at Constantinople. De Rossi gives an engraving of this statuette. Eusebius tells us that statues of our Lord, under this form, were set up by Constantine at Constantinople, but in Rome early Christian sculpture is generally confined to *bassi rilievi*. Another remarkable exception will be noticed before we leave this Museum.

Bullettino, 1869, p. 44.

The first sarcophagus on our left, as we pass up the hall, is one whose lid is ornamented with sea-monsters, and bears the



FIG. 97.—Lid of Sarcophagus of Primitiva.

inscription—MARIVS . VITELLIANVS . PRIMITIVAE . CONIVGI . FIDELISSIMAE . AAIKCB IN . "Marius Vitellianus to his most faithful wife Primitiva. Hail, innocent soul; dear wife, mayest thou live in Christ."² This lid, however, in all probability, belongs to another sarcophagus, since in Bosio's time this latter was used as the cistern for a fountain in the Medici

¹ Already engraved in Fig. 3, page 29.

² Such at least is the interpretation adopted by De Rossi, who follows Maffei in understanding the congeries of letters at the end as the initials of *Ave anima innocens kara conjux bibas in Christo*.—*Bull.* 1868, 10.

Gardens, on the Pincio, whither it had been removed from the Crypt of St. Peter's. The central group, immediately beneath the inscription, again represents the smitten rock and the apprehension of St. Peter; while on the one side is our Lord calling Lazarus as a mummy out of the tomb, close to which stands Martha; her sister Mary kneels at the feet of our Lord, and the disciples stand around. On the other side is a Good Shepherd watching over two sheep in a temple-like house, probably intended for the Church. But the most striking subject on the sarcophagus is the history of Jonas, who is represented first as being cast out of a ship, the large sail of which is filled with the wind from the conch-shell of the winged figure above. The sea-monster opens his enormous jaws to

Sarcophagus
with Jonas.



FIG. 98.—*Sarcophagus from Crypt of St. Peter's.*

receive Jonas, and a female bust in the sky apparently indicates the calm which succeeded. The same monster is next represented as vomiting forth the prophet upon the dry ground, upon which crabs, lizards, and snails are seen crawling about. Close to this scene is the reclining figure of Jonas asleep under the grateful shade of the gourd. The sculptor has filled every bit of available space with figures, and the same water in which float the sea-monsters is made to bear up a little square box, intended for the Ark, in which Noe sits and receives the olive-branch from the dove, which is made, perhaps not without meaning, to come from the place of refreshment where the prophet reposes. At the water's edge, on either side, are represented fishermen—in one case hooking a fish which a boy

is assisting him to land, and in the other, giving the basket of fish to the boy. A water bird is also looking out for prey, and may be intended to convey the warning, that others, besides those whom Christ has made "fishers of men," are on the watch for those who are born of the waters.

Sarcophagus with Cain and Abel offering sacrifice.

On the same side of the hall is another sarcophagus, upon the lid of which are two shepherds, each taking care of three

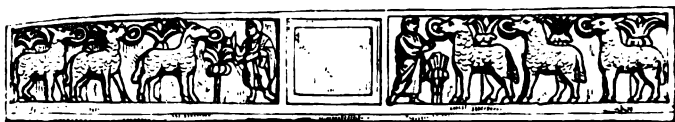


FIG. 99.—Lid of Sarcophagus with sheep and Shepherds.

sheep rather larger than themselves. Every one of the sheep holds a circular roll of bread in his mouth, evidently a figure of the Holy Eucharist, which (we have already said) was formerly consecrated in bread made in the shape of a *corona*. The sarcophagus itself is ornamented with sacred subjects, the first of which is the sacrifice of Cain and Abel. The invisible God is represented by the bearded figure seated on a stone,



FIG. 100.—Sarcophagus, with Cain and Abel, &c.

which possibly has reference to the rude altar of patriarchal times; Cain, as the eldest, offers his fruits first, while Abel follows with his lamb. In the next group, the Fall is again represented, but Eve has taken the apple, and the promised Saviour, beardless, as in all representations of the Incarnation, holds the sheaf in His hand, but extends it towards the seated

figure, as though to imply that the bread obtained by the sweat of Adam's brow is to be offered to God, if His blessing is to be expected upon the labour of man. He does not here give the lamb to Eve, Abel's offering, perhaps, sufficiently conveying the lesson. The central figure is a female with an open box in her hand, the "alabaster box of precious ointment" which Mary poured on our Lord's head, and of which He said, "Whosoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she hath done shall be told for a memory of her."¹ The remaining subjects are the paralytic carrying his bed, our Lord giving sight to the blind, changing the water into wine, and raising Lazarus from the tomb.

St. Mary Magdalene.

Proceeding still further along this side of the Museum, the visitor will hardly fail to notice a very finely sculptured sarcophagus, in the centre of which are the busts of two men, whose refined and intellectual expression of face contrasts strongly with the rude grotesqueness of most of these sculptures. It is impossible to say who these two men were; but the sarcophagus, which probably once contained their remains, formerly stood beneath the altar in the tribune of *S. Paolo fuori le mura*, and the relics of the Holy Innocents were placed within it. Sixtus V. removed it with the relics to a chapel built by him in Sta. Maria Maggiore. The upper series of figures represent Mary kissing Our Saviour's hand in gratitude for having restored her brother Lazarus to life; Peter warned of his denial before the cock should crow; and Moses receiving the law from a hand stretched out from heaven. Another outstretched hand checks the uplifted arm of Abraham as he is about to sacrifice his son Isaac, who kneels with his hands bound behind his back. The sacrifice of the true Isaac is not found among the subjects selected by early Christian art, but the article of the Creed, "crucified under Pontius Pilate," is set forth here with sufficient clearness in the group which represents the servant with the ewer and basin standing ready

Sarcophagus from *S. Paolo fuori le mura*.

Pilate washing his hands.

¹ St. Matt. xxvi. 13.



FIG. 101.—Sarcophagus from St. Paul's outside the Walls.

to wash the hands of the irresolute governor, who, seated on his veiled judgment-seat, turns away his head in token of his repugnance in condemning the innocent blood. Our interpretation of Moses as the figure of St. Peter is confirmed by this St. Peter. sarcophagus, on the lower portion of which we see that Apostle in the hands of Herod's satellites, still pointing to the stream which flows from the rock above his head; while Christ, or possibly St. John, is represented as also engaging the attention of the satellites, either in allusion to His own apprehension in the Garden, or else to teach that He suffers still in the persecution of His Church. Again, we see Daniel in the lions' den, and the prophet Habacuc, while, on the opposite side, our Lord gives sight to the blind, and multiplies the loaves and fishes. In the centre, however, is a group which has somewhat puzzled the learned. Bosio makes the old man under the tree to be Moses giving the law to the people, and the head which appears between the branches of the tree to be that of Zaccheus climbing up in order to see our Lord.

On the same side of the hall is a sarcophagus, with the nearest resemblance to the later representations of our Saviour's Passion to be found in early Christian art. It is

Sarcophagus
with the
labarum.

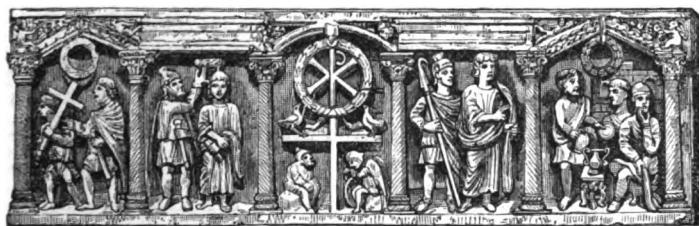


FIG. 102.—Sarcophagus in Lateran Museum of fourth or fifth century.

divided into five compartments by twisted Corinthian pillars, the pediments above which are decorated with scenes from the vintage. In the central compartment is the *labarum*, surrounded with a crown of immortality, and supported on a cross, on each of the arms of which is a dove pecking at the

crown, thus symbolically representing the hope of an immortal crown with Christ, which feeds the soul, although here below its only resting-place is His Cross. The guards appointed by Constantine to keep watch over the sacred standard are represented below by two soldiers ; and we may see here a type of the Christian army, who, whether they sleep or wake, live or die, find rest beneath the Cross. Two of the side compartments represent Our Lord witnessing a good confession before Pontius Pilate, above whom hangs a crown, the reward of those who confess Christ before men. On the other side a soldier places a crown on the head of our Saviour, but it resembles rather the crown of glory which is the recompense of the crown of thorns endured for Him on earth. The last compartment contains a representation of our Lord carrying His Cross under the guard of a soldier, but there are none of the traces of suffering with which later artists, following the sacred narrative, have familiarised our imagination, and the crown above points to the reward for bearing the Cross after our suffering Master. Above this sarcophagus is let into the wall a fragment of another, which represents a number of persons, some listening with devout attention to one who is reading to them, while others of the same company are partaking of the *agapæ*.

Representations of the Passion.

Sarcophagus under canopy.

Perhaps the finest specimen of Christian sculpture among all the sarcophagi in the Lateran Museum is that which stands under a canopy supported by two beautiful columns of Pavonazzetto marble, and is placed in this position to show how the sarcophagi were arranged in the ancient basilicas ; for this, as well as the one last described, were found in the crypt of St. Peter's. The front of the sarcophagus is sculptured with figures in high relief, divided into groups by eight richly-ornamented pillars. The groups at the two extremities are Abraham's sacrifice, and our Lord before Pilate, who is washing his hands. The rest of the figures are the Apostles grouped around our Lord, who is seated in the centre as in



FIG. 103.—Sarcophagus from the Crypt of St. Peter.

N.B.—This engraving does not do justice to the fine Grecian type of the faces in the original.—See Simelli's photograph of it.

Our Lord in
glory sur-
rounded by
the Apostles.

glory, the vault of heaven beneath His feet being expressed (as in Pagan monuments) by the veil which a female figure holds above her head. De Rossi remarks that the grace and refinement of the faces of our Lord and the Apostles would incline us to ascribe this work to the age of Septimius Severus,¹ rather than to that of Constantine, did not the ✠ on one of the sides indicate the latter as its actual date. The two principal figures among the Apostles are manifestly intended for SS. Peter and Paul, and the characteristics of each Apostle are easily to be discerned here. St. Paul is on the right, distinguished by his baldness from St. Peter, who receives, with hands reverently veiled, the new law from the Mediator of the New Testament, just as heathen magistrates were wont to receive from the emperors the book of the constitutions whereby they were to govern the province committed to their charge. Often, on similar representations, our Lord is represented as giving the volume to the Apostle, but saying nothing. In others, again, the roll bears the inscription, DOMINVS DAT LEGEM, or PACEM, sometimes one, and sometimes the other, whence the Bishop Eribert was led to engrave on the Book of the Gospels provided for the cathedral of Milan the words "LEX ET PAX." Here again we see Peter represented as the Moses of the new dispensation, and every such discovery increases the probability that in all other representations also of Moses, the chief Apostle was really meant to be understood. The two sides of this sarcophagus are covered with sculpture. On one is represented the denial of St. Peter, with a basilica and a baptistery in the background, the latter of which (no doubt by an intentional anachronism) is surmounted with the ✠. On the other side is a similar kind of background, but in front is the smitten rock, and, apparently, the "*Noli me tangere*," although this latter group may be intended to represent the gratitude of Mary for the resurrec-

SS. Peter
and Paul.

Denial of
St. Peter.

¹ Sickler, *Almanach aus Rom.*, pp. 173, 174, actually assigns to it that date.

tion of her brother. This group has been already described, with an engraving of it from Bottari, Fig. 81, page 221.

On the visitor's right, as he ascends the staircase at the end of the hall, he will notice a spirited sculptured representation of the ascent of Elias into heaven in the fiery chariot. The sons of the prophets are gazing with eager astonishment at Eliseus, who reverently, and with veiled hands, receives from the ascending prophet the cloak or *pallium*, the symbol of the double portion of the Spirit which rested upon him. In Elias, St. Ambrose and other Fathers saw a figure of our Lord; and

Sculpture of Elias ascending to heaven, and leaving his *pallium* to Eliseus.



FIG. 104.—Sculpture in the Lateran Museum, representing the ascent of Elias into heaven.

Rupertus explains further: "When Elias was on the point of being translated, he laid his *pallium* on Eliseus; because Christ our God and Lord, when about to pass out of this world unto the Father, gave to the Apostles both His office and His Spirit."¹ "Eliseus," says the Venerable Bede, "took the mantle of Elias, and with it struck the waters of Jordan, and when he invoked the God of Elias, they were divided, and he passed over. The Apostles took up, the Church founded by them took up, the sacraments of her Redeemer, and with them

¹ Rupert. Abb. De Trin. v. c. 15.

is spiritually enlightened, cleansed, and consecrated; and she also invoked the name of God the Father, and learned how to conquer the torrent of death, and, despising the hindrance of it, to pass over to eternal life."¹ This history forms the subject of a painting which may still be seen in the Catacomb of SS. Nereus and Achilles. It is carved also at the end of a sarcophagus near the door of the sacristy of St. Peter's containing the bodies of Popes Leo II., III., and IV.; and on two or three other sarcophagi, copied in the works of Bosio, Bottari, and others. It would probably have reminded Roman Christians of the *pallium*, the symbol of jurisdiction worn by the Bishops of Rome, and given by them to metropolitans as from the very body of St. Peter,—“*de corpore Sancti Petri.*”² It is worthy of notice, in connection with this subject, and also with the roll given to St. Peter by the ascended Saviour in the last sarcophagus, that the most ancient part of Filocalus' catalogue of the Popes commenced thus:—*“Passus est Dominus noster Jesus Christus duobus Geminis consulibus viii Kal. Apriles, et post Ascensum ejus beatissimus Petrus episcopatum suscepit, ex quo tempore,”* &c.

R.S., ii 307.

“Our Lord Jesus Christ suffered on the 25th of March, the two Gemini being consuls, and after His Ascension the most blessed Peter undertook the episcopacy, after which time,” &c.

The Nativity. Above the translation of Elias is a fragment of a small sarcophagus representing the Nativity, with the ox and the ass



FIG. 105.—Part of Sarcophagus with Nativity, from Aringhi.

and the Magi; and below is a rude *intaglio* of the raising of Lazarus, on a marble covering of one of the *loculi*, with an

¹ Hom. in Ascen. Dom.

² See Note F in Appendix to Vol. I.

inscription to DATVS. But our readers will easily be able to interpret for themselves most of the other sculptures in this Museum.

As we pass out of the great hall into the upper corridor, around which De Rossi has arranged the columns of inscriptions from the Catacombs, we may observe a number of casts of a sarcophagus, similar to some that we have described, and yet possessing certain remarkable features peculiar to itself. Many of our readers will have seen the original in St. Peter's crypt, where it stands on the right hand of the passage leading to the subterranean chapel, and bears the inscription :—

Sarcophagus
of Junius
Bassus.

IVN · BASSVS VC QVI VIXIT ANNIS · XLII MEN · II · IN IPSA
PRAEFECTVRA VRBIS
NEOFITVS IIT · AD DEVM · VIII KAL SEPT EVSEBIO ET
YPATIO COSS.

“Junius Bassus, who lived forty-two years and two months. In the very year in which he was Prefect of the city, he went to God, a neophyte, on the 23d of August, A.D. 359.”

The noble family of the Bassi is mentioned by Prudentius as having been among the first of patrician rank to embrace the Christian religion;¹ and the death of this very Junius Bassus is recorded by a contemporary writer² as having taken place soon after his appointment as Prefect of Rome. The sarcophagus is of white marble, handsomely carved in the Corinthian style; and besides the representations of Adam and Eve, the sacrifice of Isaac, Daniel among the lions, and our Lord in glory delivering the law to His Apostles, we have, on the upper portion, a group in which is represented the apprehension of our Saviour in the garden; and again His condemnation by Pilate. The apprehension of St. Peter appears on the other side, the Apostle being distinguished from his Lord by the beard, thus confirming our explanation of a similar scene on other sarcophagi. The lower portion also

¹ Contr. Symmach. i. 558.

² Ammianus Marcellinus.

contains in the centre our Lord's entry into Jerusalem; and, at one extremity, Job comforted by his friends, while his wife, with her handkerchief to her nose, illustrates the complaint of the afflicted patriarch, "My wife hath abhorred my breath."¹ The other extremity contains the representation of a person bound and led away, which, from the baldness of the head, and the sword in the hand of one of his guards, we may consider to be intended for St. Paul being conducted to the place of his execution on the Ostian Way.

Symbolical
figures of the
Lamb work-
ing miracles.

The spandrils of the five arches which make up the lower portion are ornamented with figures which form perhaps the most interesting feature in this sarcophagus. The subjects indeed have been explained before in other sculptures, but here it is a lamb who occupies the place of the Three Children in the furnace of Nabuchadonosor. A lamb with a rod touches the rock from which another lamb drinks. Again, a lamb with the rod multiplies the loaves; a lamb imposes his foot upon the head of another lamb, while a dove pours down a stream of light upon the latter, signifying the sevenfold gift of the Holy Ghost in the sacrament of Confirmation or of Holy Order, or, perhaps this may represent the Baptism of our Lord. Further on, a lamb approaches reverently to receive the law; and lastly, a lamb with the rod brings forth Lazarus from his tomb. These six subjects prove incontestably the symbolical character of the subjects represented on these sarcophagi, and teach us that, whether in the hand of Moses, or of Peter, or of the Lamb, the Divine rod is the power of Christ, by whom the miracles of grace in the sacraments of the Church are still worked.²

¹ Job xix. 7.

² These six subjects are more clearly to be distinguished in Bosio, *Rom. Sott.*, p. 45, than on the sarcophagus itself, which has probably suffered some damage during the last two hundred years.

It is interesting to observe the comparative frequency of the different scriptural subjects introduced into the sculptured sarcophagi. The following list is taken from Burgon's *Letters from Rome*, Letter XX., with

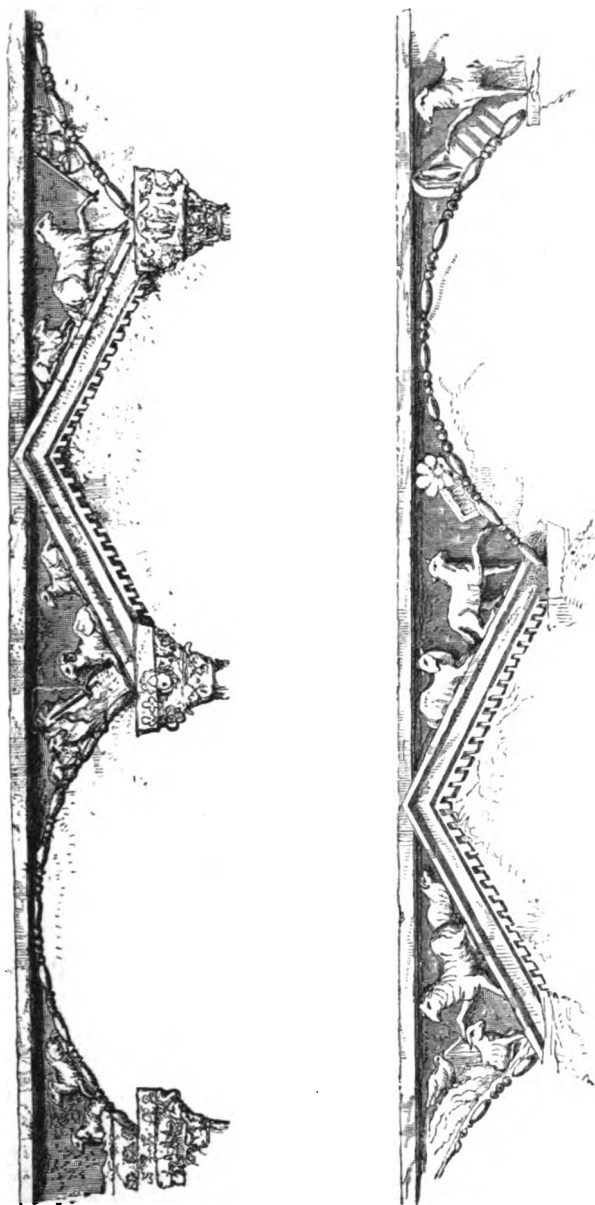


FIG. 106.—Spandrels on the Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, A.D. 359.

Statue of St.
Hippolytus.

Our account of the Christian sculptures in the Lateran Museum will not be complete without some notice of the statue of St. Hippolytus, which stands at the upper end of the hall, and which is pronounced by Winckelmann and other critics to be the finest known specimen of early Christian sculpture. This statue was discovered, A.D. 1551, when some excavations were being made near the Basilica of San Lorenzo *fuori le mura*, and must have stood either in the subterranean Cemetery of St. Hippolytus, or in a Basilica close by. It bears every mark of having been executed during the third century, for, though the head and arm are modern restorations, yet the classical dignity of the figure is greatly superior to statues of the age of Constantine; while the *Canon Paschalis*, engraved on one of the sides of the chair in which the Saint is seated, would hardly have been considered worthy of commemoration many years after the martyrdom of St. Hippolytus.

Paschal
Canon of St.
Hippolytus.

We have no intention of taxing our readers' patience with an account of the long disputes concerning the proper time for the observance of Easter, which occupied so much serious attention during the early ages of the Church. It is well

one or two corrections in the description. He counted fifty-five sarcophagi, and we have placed side by side with his numbers those which result from an examination of the forty-eight sarcophagi illustrated by Bosio, thirty of which were found in the crypts of the Vatican :—

	Lateran. Bosio.			Lateran. Bosio.	
History of Jonas, . . .	23	11	Fall of Adam and Eve, . .	14	10
The Smitten Rock, . . .	21	16	Woman with Issue of Blood, .	8	9
Apprehension of St. Peter, .	20	14	Christ's Entry into Jerusalem, .	6	8
Miracle of Loaves, . . .	20	14	The Good Shepherd, . . .	6	9
Giving Sight to Blind, . . .	19	11	Noe in Ark,	5	6
Change of Water into Wine, .	16	8	Christ before Pilate, . . .	5	6
Raising of Lazarus, . . .	16	14	Giving of the Law,	4	6
Denial of St. Peter, . . .	14	8	Three Children in Fire, . . .	4	3
Daniel in Lions' Den, . . .	14	7	Moses taking off his Shoes, . .	2	2
Paralytic Healed,	12	7	Elias taken up to Heaven, . .	2	3
Creation of Eve,	11	2	Nativity with Ox and Ass, . .	1	4
Sacrifice of Isaac,	11	9	Crowning with Thorns, . . .	1	1
Adoration of Magi,	11	8			

Mr. Burgon, in his contemptuous remarks about the symbolical meaning of these sculptures, seems to forget the method of interpreting Holy Scripture well-nigh universal among the Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, to which these sarcophagi belong.



FIG. 107.—*Statue of St. Hippolytus, Third Century.*

known, however, that the Roman Church always strenuously opposed those who followed the Jewish reckoning, and who, from their keeping Easter on the 14th day of the lunar month, received the name of *Quartodecimans*. Still, during the first and second centuries the Church had, as was natural, adopted the Jewish mode of determining the Paschal full moon; but the blind fury of that unhappy people against Christianity prejudiced the minds of Christians against anything coming from them; and since, at the beginning of the third century, the Church possessed men in no way inferior to the Jewish rabbis in scientific knowledge, it was fitting that the Christian bishops, and especially the Bishop of Rome, should sanction some authoritative method for determining the great Christian festival.

Hippolytus was the first to form a table, in which, by doubling the Greek periods of eight years, he endeavoured, with the help of seven such periods of sixteen years each, to obtain a formula by which the difference between the lunar and solar years should be corrected, and the true Easter determined for ever. There is, in accordance with 'this mode of calculation, engraved on the opposite side of the chair to that upon which the *canon* itself is found, a table for 112 years. Unfortunately, St. Hippolytus' method laboured under the fatal defect of an error of three days in every sixteen years; and hence the praise lavished upon the first attempt to form an independent Christian calendar died away, and fresh calculations became necessary. We learn this from a work which has been ascribed to St. Cyprian, and which bears the date of A.D. 243, and whose author, curiously enough, ascribes St. Hippolytus' error of three days to his having calculated from the creation of the world instead of from the 4th day, on which the moon was created! We may therefore assume that this statue belongs to the early part of the third century—indeed, one may conclude it must have been during the first cycle—between 222 and 238, while the errors of Hippolytus'

canon still remained unknown, and the renown of its author caused it to be considered a fitting tribute to his memory.

St. Hippolytus professes that his table will show Easter in the past as well as in the future. He therefore gives some of the more remarkable Paschal solemnities, such as the Exodus, which he makes out to have taken place on April 2d, or April 5th, if Daniel's computation is to be followed. The Paschal solemnities in the desert, in the time of Josue, Ezekias, Josias, and Esdras are also determined. The Pasch in the year when Christ was born, and also in that wherein He suffered, are marked as being of the greatest interest to all Christians.

This calculation and its application fill the greater part of the space on either side of the chair, but the engraver, finding a small space unoccupied, filled it with the names of as many of the works of St. Hippolytus as could be written there. This list commences with the titles of two works, of which only the last four letters can now be deciphered. Critics have exercised their ingenuity in supplying the remainder, but no certainty can be arrived at. The Paschal Canon, and other matters inscribed on this statue, are given with explanations and a treatise by P. Bucher in Migne's edition of the works of St. Hippolytus, to which we must refer those of our readers who desire to investigate further this interesting monument of early Christian art.



BOOK V.

ARTICLES FOUND IN THE CATACOMBS.

CHAPTER I.

MISCELLANEOUS OBJECTS FOUND IN THE CATACOMBS.

Variety of objects found in the Catacombs, classified by De Rossi. 1. Personal ornaments—cameos and precious stones, rings, necklaces, bracelets, bullæ. 2. Toys—dice, children's playthings. 3. Tessera of various kinds—labels for slaves. 4. Domestic utensils,—made of precious stone, marble, ivory and bone—covers of tablets and diptychs—ivories with Christian emblems on them. Articles formed of gold, silver, bronze, glass, and enamel—Remarkable glass bowl—glass phials—Terra-cotta work, amphora. 5. Coins and medals. 6. Articles belonging to tombs,—lamps, their number and variety—ampullæ, their form—instruments of torture.

Objects found
in Catacombs.

THERE are, in many of the great museums of Europe, collections, more or less extensive, of articles found in the Catacombs of Rome. Rings, brooches, clasps, and other personal ornaments; combs, *styli*, and such like articles of ordinary use; toys, medals, coins, *bullæ*, and *tessera*; various domestic utensils, as well as articles more directly connected with Christian burials, are marked as having been found in the Catacombs. In some few cases the particular locality where they were found has been mentioned; but, unfortunately, these are only rare instances, and most of those found before this

century are without any clue to the spot where they were discovered. Still, a sufficient number of these articles have been brought to light within the last thirty years to enable us to affirm that the rest have once, like these, been stuck into the cement which surrounded the *loculi* at the time of burial, while the cement was still moist, and they must have been placed there by surviving friends, who wished thus to express their own affection, and to distinguish the grave of their departed relative from those around it. Among the objects thus found the gilded glasses form a class by themselves, and we shall treat of them in a separate chapter. For the present we shall describe the other objects under the various classes in which M. De Rossi has arranged them, and we shall keep in view, as he does, the chronological value of these remnants of antiquity.

I. PERSONAL ORNAMENTS.

The most valuable of these objects are the cameos and other ^{Cameos and precious stones.} precious stones, some of which were evidently set in brooches, or used as *phalera*, ornaments worn by Roman patricians. Others are too large for this purpose. Great quantities of these treasures must have been taken from the Catacombs during the last 300 years; although, doubtless, the Lombards and other ancient spoilers had carried off whatever they could lay hands upon centuries before. Boldetti says that "precious stones and fragments of chalcedony, agate, jasper, topaz, plasma,¹ and especially *intagli* in sapphire-agate and cameos of various kinds," found in his time, were collected in the museum of Cardinal Carpegna. He also remarks that "the *intagli* and the most rare and valuable cameos were found in the Cemetery of Priscilla."²

Buonarroti has published engravings of some of the most *R.S.*, iii. 581. remarkable of these. We may mention a large cameo of

¹ A green quartz.

² Boldetti, *Osservazioni*, pp. 495, 496.

chalcedony, in two colours, cut into a portrait of Augustus ;¹ a bust of Livia, on jasper-chalcedony ;² of Plotina, in agate of two colours ;³ and of Commodus, in aqua-marina.⁴ The 'Triumph of Bacchus,'⁵ and other mythological subjects are found engraved on precious stones, and on glass imitations of gems. The head of Augustus is expressly stated by Boldetti to have been found in the Cemetery of Priscilla, and the 'Triumph of Bacchus' is said in the papers of Sante Bartoli to have been brought to light in 1661, in what is now identified as the Cemetery of Calepodius, on the Via Aurelia.⁶ In 1851 De Rossi himself found in the Cemetery of St. Agnes (Ostrianum) and carried to the Christian Museum in the Vatican Library a very fine fragment of the head of Augustus, engraved on a large cameo of Oriental sardonyx. In the same cemetery, he saw in a gallery, containing a dated inscription of the year 291, a beautiful *phalera* of chalcedony still sticking in the cement of a *loculus*. It is remarkable that none of these jewels show any trace of Byzantine art : they all belong to the period when Rome was the capital of the empire.

Rings.

We might have expected to find gems engraved for rings, but neither Bosio nor Boldetti, nor any later explorers, have ever discovered a certain specimen in the Catacombs of a ring

¹ Buonarroti, *Osservazioni istoriche sopra alcune Medaglionni*, &c., p. 45.
 "The stone is a chalcedony of two colours ; the head is formed from being cut in a whitish spot inclining to flesh colour, and would be quite detached like the bust of an ordinary statue, if it were not that behind the nape of the neck there is a sphere of the same stone of sapphirine colour, which serves as a groundwork for the bust. The stone is about 6.29 inches high, by 4.35 inches wide (reduced to English measure), and about the same in thickness."

² *Ib.*, p. 415.

³ *Ib.*, p. 24.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 146.

⁵ *Ib.*, p. 427.

⁶ This cameo, said to be the largest in the world, is now in the Vatican. It is 16.38 inches long, by 11.68 inches broad, and five different shades of colour appear, according to the depth to which the carving reaches, and this depth had to be most carefully considered by the engraver in order to preserve the proper colours, since the layers of colours are of very variable thickness in different parts of the stone.

with a jewel in it. It is possible that the workmen may have picked up some of such gems and have disposed of them by stealth. Even metal rings without stones in them are extremely rare, while plain rings of bone or ivory are very common. Boldetti gives an engraving of ten metal rings found in the Catacombs. Of these, one bears the symbols of the anchor and the ship, one the dove, two have the  between two palm branches, two the monogram alone, one with the letters A and Ω; one is of classical form terminating in two lions' heads, while the remaining two are furnished with little keys after a well-known Roman fashion. Since Boldetti's time only one such ring has come to light. It is of bronze, with the monogram and the palms, and was found in 1806 in a cemetery on the Via Salaria Nova. Among all these instances, none bears evidence of a period later than the early part of the fourth century. The symbols above described are precisely those mentioned by St. Clement of Alexandria as used in his day on the rings of Christians. The monogram is always of the type of the *labarum* of Constantine; the cross alone never appears. The form of the rings belongs to the Classical, not to the Byzantine period.

Ornaments for the neck, and locketts to hang from the neck are even now often found in the Catacombs. De Rossi has often seen, sometimes separately stuck in the plaster, perforated beads of glass, enamel, amber, and other material, sometimes within the tomb near the neck or arms of the skeleton lying in such numbers as to show that they had once been necklaces or bracelets. In Imperial times the children of free citizens were distinguished by the wearing of a *bulla*, often made in the form of a heart, and hollow within. These *bullæ* were worn until the age of seventeen, and then hung up as votive offerings in the temples. The rich had them made of gold, the poor of leather, but the shape and material varied greatly. Almost every one wore some kind of amulet. The Christians substituted sacred relics for the superstitious charms

Necklaces.
Bullæ.

Bullettino,
1863, 31.

of the Pagans, and in the fifth and sixth centuries made these reliquaries in the form of a cross. De Rossi describes one of these found in a tomb of the Basilica of San Lorenzo. But no cruciform reliquary has been found in the Catacombs. Other ornaments, such as little fish of glass, enamel, mother of pearl, crystal, ivory, and other substances have been found, with holes pierced in them for suspension round the neck. All the *bullæ* found in the Catacombs are of the type used in classical times and not to be distinguished from those found in Pagan sepulchres. The same remark applies to the various earrings, drops, armlets, brooches, clasps, and similar ornaments. They are invariably of the Classical period, and show no trace of Byzantine art.

2.—GAMES AND CHILDREN'S PLAYTHINGS.

Dice and
Toys.

Dice belong rather to the amusements of grown-up persons than to children's games, and these are found in great variety of size in ivory, bone, and stone, stuck like other objects in the cement of the *loculi*. But still more frequently are to be seen the playthings of children. Dolls and puppets with movable joints, sometimes in ivory, but mostly made of bone; sometimes entire, sometimes in fragments, are very common. So also are terra-cotta money-boxes, moulded sometimes into the form of human heads, in a fashion well known to the ancient Romans. Among children's playthings may also be reckoned little bells, generally in bronze with a ring of the same metal. In 1851 De Rossi saw a silver bell of this kind fastened into a *loculus* in a gallery of the third century. Bells were considered by the Pagans as charms against fire, but we have no reason to suppose that these were anything more than children's toys. Playthings made in the shape of animals are often found. The accompanying woodcut represents a small leopard made of a flat piece of bone, found sticking in the plaster of a *loculus* in a gallery in the Area of St. Hippolytus. Every one knows how strongly the human heart is affected by

R.S., iii. 305.

Area XIII., near
No. 7.

the sight of toys which have once belonged to a child that is dead, how fondly parents treasure up these precious mementoes of their departed little ones, and we can all understand the feeling that prompted the adornment of children's graves with these instruments of their innocent pastimes. Little wheels, the rims of little mirrors, and little shields, miniature imitations of military trappings, civil decorations, and domestic furniture,—in a word, all the paraphernalia of the baby-house,—have been found affixed to the walls of the Catacombs. It is, however, worthy of notice, that, whereas, in the ruins of houses belonging to the latter part of the fourth, and to the fifth and sixth centuries, children's toys are often found with

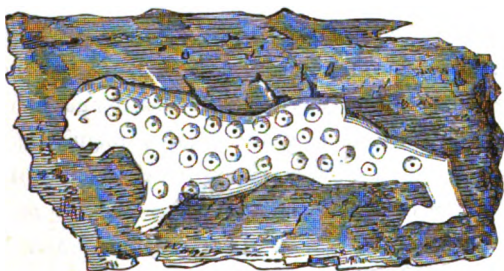


FIG. 108.—Bone Toy-Leopard in Arenarium of Hippolytus.

the sacred monogram and other marks of Christianity upon them, no signs of Christianity appear on those found in the Catacombs. It is just possible that a small bronze *labarum*, *R.S.*, iii. 341. the impression of which De Rossi found on the plaster of a *loculus*, might have been one of these children's toys.

3.—*TESSERÆ* OF VARIOUS KINDS.

A variety of objects are included under the word *tessera*. *Tesseræ*. Originally, cubes such as are still used for dice were denoted *R.S.*, iii. 587. &c. by this name, and hence mosaic floorings composed of a number of small cubes are still called "tessellated pavement." Small pieces of marble, pottery, glass, mother of pearl, ivory, or precious stones, by no means always preserving the cubical

form, were still called *tessera*, and used for tokens of various kinds. Thus there was the *tessera hospitalis*, a pledge of mutual friendship between the host and his guest, which was often broken in half, each party retaining one portion, like the broken sixpence of rustic lovers in England. Boldetti gives¹ an engraving of the half of an ivory egg found in the Catacombs, having the busts of a man and his wife with the above them on the section, and the words, *Dignitas amicorum vivas cum tuis feliciter* encircling the outside of the egg. This may be a more elaborate kind of love-token. The *tessera frumentaria* or *nummaria* was a ticket distributed on certain occasions to the poor, which entitled them to receive in exchange the quantity of corn or money denoted by the marks on the token. The *tessera theatralis* was the ticket for a certain seat in the amphitheatre. The *tessera militaris*, the *συνθημα* of the Greeks, was a token distributed among the soldiers before a battle, as a means of distinguishing friends from foes. Sometimes it bore upon it the watchword, as the *Venus Genitrix* of Julius Cæsar, or the *Hercules invictus* of Pompey. Examples of all of these may be found in most museums and works illustrative of Roman antiquities.

Tesserae
gladiatoriae.

A more important class of *tessera*, in an archæological point of view, are those given in token of freedom from service to gladiators who had acquitted themselves well in the contests. These *tesserae gladiatoriae* have inscribed on them the names of the Consuls for the year, and thus indicate the exact date at which they were used, although these dates have only been found between the times of Sylla and Vespasian.

It might be supposed unlikely that these latter species of *tesserae* would be found in Christian cemeteries. Yet one has been noticed by Boldetti as discovered in the Cemetery of Callixtus, and two others of the dates B.C. 52 and A.D. 42 have been published by Marini, whose MS. in the Vatican states them to have been found together in the Catacombs beneath

¹ Page 514.

the Villa Pamfili, that is, in part of the Cemetery of Lucina, where the martyrs Processus and Martinianus were buried in Apostolic times. The use of phrases taken from the gladiatorial combats were, from the times of the Apostles, familiar to Christians. St. Paul compares the Christian spiritual conflict to the combatant in the arena,¹ and applies the same illustration to his own sufferings and approaching martyrdom.²

The Apocalyptic Epistle to the Church of Pergamus, where Antipas and others had suffered martyrdom, contains the promise—"To him that overcometh, I will give the hidden manna, and will give him a white counter (*calculus*, ψῆφον), and in the counter a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it."³ Here Christ is represented as the Judge of the combat, giving to the victor the *tessera* with the conqueror's name written on it. The *tessera gladiatoria* was usually oblong and flat, and perhaps the sacred writer also alludes to the *tessera missiles*, or little balls of glass and other materials, thrown by Nero and some other emperors among the crowd at the shows, and in which was a number corresponding to some prize of money or other gift. Two of these *missilia*, circular, but not spherical, are in the British Museum, one with the letters XII and IB on its sides, the other with XIII and IA. De Rossi considers the little glass, bone, and ivory fishes with numbers on them to be also *missilia*. Many of these various kinds of *tesserae* have been found in the Catacombs, all bearing evidences of classical antiquity, none showing any sign of Byzantine or Gothic workmanship.

Among the *tesserae* may be classed the tablet of ivory, in the Vatican Library, with other objects from the Catacombs, which bears the words TENE ME NE FVGIA, and was evidently once hung round the neck of a slave. These tablets were introduced in the time of Constantine, who forbade the degrading custom of branding the foreheads of slaves. It is the only

Labels for
slaves, &c.

¹ 1 Cor. x. 25.

² Compare 1 Cor. xv. 32 with 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7.

³ Apoc. ii. 17.

specimen of such tablets that has been found in the cemeteries. At least one example of bronze labels appended to the trappings of horses specially exempted from military conscription was found in the *loculus* of a Catacomb on the Via Appia. It bears the inscription LOLLIANI V. C. PRET TRIUMFALIS; and as the *prætor triumphalis* was instituted by Constantine in the year 331, and Lollian was Consul in 355, the date of this tablet is fixed with unusual precision.

4.—DOMESTIC UTENSILS.

Articles
formed of
stone.

The immense variety of articles of domestic use that have come to light in the Catacombs renders it somewhat difficult to classify them. De Rossi arranges them according to the material of which they are formed. Following this order, we may observe that besides the cameo and other precious stones already described under the head of personal ornaments, a quantity of little stone vases, plates, covers or bottoms of boxes, small caskets of sardonix and agate have been found in the Catacombs every now and then during the last 300 years. Many of these are preserved in the Vatican Library, and among them a number of beautiful little slabs of rock crystal, with figures of genii, peacocks, and other birds, and goats, with vines and foliage, and other subjects engraved upon them in *intaglio*. Padre Marchi found one of these crystal slabs sticking to a *loculus*, and on it were engraved *putti* and flower-wreaths. Boldetti publishes an engraving of a little crystal table with short feet. Fragments of pillars and bases of rock crystal are mentioned by Buonarroti among the objects in the Carpegna Museum found in the subterranean cemeteries. Several of these are now in the Museum of the Vatican Library, and among them a crystal figure of a boy standing on a globe. All these contributions to our Museums from the Catacombs in crystal and other precious stones are cut with a skill more or less classical, and in none of them is there any certain sign of Christian, still less of Byzantine art. One piece alone of

those in the Vatican might be supposed to bear a Christian signification. It is a fish engraved on a plain slab of crystal. No indication of a Christian design appears, but if such were intended, both the excellence of the style and the antiquity of the symbolism would place it among the very earliest specimens of Christian art.

Articles formed of marble and other stone, such as busts and heads and other parts of statues, were found by Boldetti among the rubbish in some of the Catacomb galleries, and have frequently been remarked by De Rossi in his explorations. The latter says, "I have seen in the cemeteries different fragments of small sculptured figures of ancient Roman design, in white, black, and coloured marbles, used as signs to mark graves; cornices of marble, especially red; and slabs of slate, with beautiful leaves and other decorative-figures carved upon them, and inlaid with tarsia-work of marbles of various colours." Among this kind of work may be classed the beautiful monograms of Christ cut entirely out in *palombino*, with the interstices filled up with enamel. These are works of the fourth century, and a good example is the specimen lately found in the Cemetery of St. Agnes, with the inscription IN HOC SIGNO SIRICI . . . round the labarum of Constantine. The original, of which the woodcut on the next page is a reduced figure, is eight inches in diameter. The upper half of this fragment was discovered in 1872, and the inscription variously interpreted, until the other portion with IN HOC SIG *Bullettino, 1872, 33. 35.* supplying the true version was brought to light by the excavations made in 1875. Bits of enamel in various colours are still sticking to the upper part of the A and P. Small portable mosaics, sometimes on terra-cotta tablets, have been found used to close or to adorn the *loculi*. Traces of such mosaics occur especially in the Cemetery of Domitilla, and their fineness proves them to belong to a period earlier than the decline of art in the fifth century. A very fine head of our Saviour in sham mosaic was formerly preserved in the Vatican Library as

having come from the Catacombs, but is evidently a modern imposture. In the Cemetery of St. Agnes, in 1876, a *loculus* was discovered intact, with an epitaph in the style and character of the second century, and closing it was a marble slab cut out into a polygonal hollow, and forming a frame for the portrait of the deceased in enamel and other materials. Similar



FIG. 109.—Marble Monogram found in St. Agnes'.

cavities, now empty, both round and square, may often be noticed in the sepulchral slabs even in the Cemetery of Calixtus. These cavities sometimes served to hold coins or medals. Buonarroti saw in the Catacomb of St. Agnes a medal of Julia Augusta embedded in the long marble slab of the tomb of one Chrisogenia, and adds, in his note upon it, that he found "the embedding of another smaller medal, and

a large oblong hole, which served perhaps for some piece of enamel or ivory, such as one finds generally walled up inside the tombs." ¹

Articles made of bone and ivory are more numerous than any other class of objects found in the Catacombs, especially if we add to them those formed of tortoise-shell, mother-of-pearl, and amber. The larger oblong slabs of ivory have served as covers to diptychs and writing-tablets; the small bits of all these materials probably served as ornaments to doors or household furniture, or formed the sides of boxes and caskets; round pieces have been the covers or bottoms of little boxes (*pyxides*) for holding perfumes, ointment, medicine, or for keeping jewels in. Some of these ivory and other vessels are elegantly carved into the shape of heads, faces of gorgons, and masks. Handles of knives, and sticks, and all kinds of weapons and other instruments held in the hand are made in the form of Hercules' club, of winged victories, and of apples. In the Vatican Library is an ivory needle-case and a slab of mother-of-pearl with an eagle carved on it, pierced with holes in order for it to be fastened with nails. This latter object was recently taken from the Cemetery of Callixtus by De Rossi himself. In the Cemetery of St. Saturninus there is still fastened in the plaster a little ivory statuette, much broken. It looks like Bacchus, gently leaning on his thyrsus, with his right hand raised above his head, and a panther at his feet. Ivory decorations in relief representing faggots, chests, little buildings, &c., are often found broken, and often only fragments of them sticking in the plaster. An immense ivory finger was seen by Padre Marchi in the Cemetery of Cyriaca. Boldetti says: "One sees in the cemeteries some very thin plates of ivory with *intagli* of exquisite workmanship upon them, like lace-work with foliage and fruit and such subjects, with divers names and letters cut out in the ivory; but in the attempt to detach them from the plaster their delicacy makes

Ivory and
bone work.
R.S., iii. 593.

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 421.

R.S., iii. 594.

them break into little bits.”¹ De Rossi adds: “I also have seen even now adhering to the plaster pieces of these very thin ivory plates carved in open work, and imitating the scales and lattice-work of the *transenna* in the most elegant patterns of the third and fourth centuries.” The testimony of Boldetti, the objects illustrated by Buonarroti, who engraves some fifteen ivories of mythological subjects from the Carpegna Museum, and modern experience, alike prove that the Catacombs have been, and are still, a rich mine of ivories and figured bone-work of Pagan art, while extremely rare are the instances of ivories of Christian workmanship, and these few are in a style anterior to the Byzantine period. The same may be said of the objects in amber and other material.

Covers of
tablets and
diptychs.

Ivory writing-tablets and diptychs were in constant use among the Romans, and the fashion by no means diminished but rather increased in the fifth century, and even after that. In fact, it was adopted by the Church as the usual adornment of liturgical books, especially the Gospels and the diptychs used in the Sacred Liturgy. Ivory pyxes were also used as ciboria for the Blessed Sacrament,² and also as reliquaries. Episcopal chairs, like the chair of St. Peter, and the furniture of nobles were ornamented with strips and plates of ivory. The celebrated chair of Maximianus, Archbishop of Ravenna, A.D. 549, is covered with ivory plates adorned with Biblical subjects. But among all the ivories found in the Catacombs, we see numerous specimens of tablet-covers, and plates engraved in ancient style, and yet not one sign of Christianity. The adjoining woodcut represents a portion of a diptych-cover, carved in good classical style, on a thin plate of ivory. It was found by De Rossi sticking to the plaster in the same gallery where the bone leopard was found. Of the consular

R.S., iii. 305.

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 514.

² It may be interesting to the reader to remember that the ciborium preserved at St. Damiano, at Assisi, and which St. Clare held in her hands, when she confronted the Saracens, is composed of ivory.

diptychs¹ of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, of the ecclesiastical diptychs of the same period, or of any other ivory plates adorned with Christian subjects, not even a fragment has been found in the Catacombs. The same may be said of ivory pyxes of Christian workmanship, of a similar character to that in the Vatican Museum, ornamented with Biblical subjects in relief.

As yet the only articles in ivory, bone, or amber, with distinctly Christian ornaments which are known to have been found in the Catacombs, are five in number, and it is worth while to examine each separately.

1. The first is the ivory pommel of an arm-chair, found by De Rossi, with a coin fresh from the mint of Aurelian, in the plaster of a *loculus* in gallery *h* of the Cemetery of Lucina. This may confidently be assigned to the latter



Christian
ivories.

R.S., i. 335, *lavr.*
xvii. 3.

FIG. 110.—Ivory Cover of Diptych,
found in *Arenarium of Hippolytus*.

¹ The consular diptychs are oblong plates of ivory, varying from 12 to 15 inches long, and from 4 to 6 inches wide, hinged together, with a slight depression of the surface inside to afford space for the layer of wax to be used for writing. The outside of each leaf was sculptured with mythological subjects. It was the custom of new consuls to present these diptychs to the senators, governors of provinces, and other eminent persons, and they contained the *Fasti Consulares*, or Acts of the Consuls, from L. Junius Brutus down to the donor, whose name or portrait was carved on the outside. Some specimens may be seen in the South Kensington Museum. They are of the greatest archæological value, since each specimen of ivory-carving thus bears its own date. Professor Westwood gives a catalogue of all those leaves that are now preserved, twenty-one in number, and woodcuts of two of them, one of A.D. 322, without any sign of Christianity, and the other of A.D. 505, with a bust of our Lord between the emperor and empress.—See Maskell's *Art Handbook*, No. 2.—*Ivories: Ancient and Mediæval*, pp. 21–31.

half of the third century. The pommel has somewhat rudely engraved upon it a sheep feeding, with the words **HILARVS ZOTICENI CONIVGI**, and we may suppose that the chair was a present from Hilarus to Zoticen his wife.

2. Another rare example of early Christian art is to be found among the ivories in the Vatican, and is figured in Padre Garrucci's edition of Macarius' *Hagioglypta*, p. 7. It represents a boat with three men in it, one of whom is drawing a net enclosing an enormous fish. One side of the boat has inscribed upon it the word **ETCEBI** and the other acclamation **ZHCAIC**. This latter word seems to have been mistaken by Buonarroti for **IHCVC**, and those who, like Garrucci, have

copied his engraving, have perpetuated the error. The whole stands on a pedestal of acanthus leaves, and forms a beautiful specimen of Christian art, which at latest cannot be assigned to a more modern date than the early part of the reign of Constantine.



FIG. III.—Ivory Finial from the Catacombs.

3. We have already mentioned the half-egg of ivory discovered and described by Boldetti. Raoul Rochette considers it a *tessera hospitalis*, but Marini, who saw it in the Strozzi Museum, pronounces it the memorial of a husband and wife. The style is that of the gilded glasses, *i.e.*, of the fourth century.

4. The same may be said of a nut made of amber, which opens, and discloses in one of the sections a bas-relief of Abraham offering up Isaac. This nut Boldetti found affixed to a tomb.¹

5. The most important of the Christian ivories that have been

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 310. The engraving is on p. 298.

found in the cemeteries is the plate of ivory, described by Boddetti as found in the Cemetery of Callixtus, or rather of St. Domitilla, and now in the Vatican Library. Our figure of it is taken from Martigny, who traced it from the original. It represents our Saviour, not as a beardless youth, as in the more ancient frescoes and sarcophagi, but bearded, and in a conventional form, showing traces of Byzantine art. Still De Rossi considers it as probably belonging to the end of the fourth rather than to the fifth century. The nimbus is simple, not cruciform, and on the top of the head is the monogram with the cross erect.



R.S., iii. 596.

FIG. 112.—Ivory Plate from St. Domitilla.

These are all that are known to be Christian. Some three or four other ivories have been described by different authors as Christian; and among them we may mention a sketch of an ivory found in the Cemetery of Callixtus by Marangóni, in a MS. preserved in the Library of Oscott College, and representing a lady with a royal crown on her head and a palm in her right hand. But the sketch is too rough to enable us to determine the style and age of this ivory. It is therefore impossible to resist the conclusion, that the vast collection of bone and ivory work found in the Catacombs, even including the few examples of Christian art, belongs altogether to the first four centuries.

Passing on to objects formed of metal, Bosio writes: "It was not usual for the Christians of the primitive Church to place gold in their tombs, except such as was woven into the tissue of robes, or was in the rings which they had on their fingers, or else medals which they put in to mark the time when the burial took place, as we have seen in many monu-
Articles formed of metal. Gold.

R.S., iii. 309.

ments in the sacred cemeteries.”¹ De Rossi thinks that Bosio does not mean medals or coins of solid gold, but gilded medals, such as the one which has left some flakes of gold-leaf on the plaster of a *loculus* above the *arenarium* of Hippolytus. Medals overlaid with gold or silver belong for the most part to the third century. Boldetti, Padre Marchi, and De Rossi have all found pieces of gold tissue and gold thread in the *loculi*, but they have never come upon rings or other objects made of gold. If there ever were such articles, the greed of explorers has made away with them. Even when the cemeteries were in actual use, it would have been extremely difficult to prevent theft, and prudence would counsel the Christians to avoid offering such temptation to spoilers.

Silver.

The same reason would apply to silver; nevertheless we have some examples of this metal being found in the Catacombs. Marangoni notices a silver spoon stuck outside a *loculus* of the so-called Cemetery of St. Saturninus. Boldetti, in forty years of labour in the Catacombs, found only one article of silver, and that was the head of a door-nail ornamented with a very beautiful rim of silver.² The silver bell mentioned above is the only piece of silver work that De Rossi has seen in the Catacombs.

Bronzes.

There is no such scarcity in the articles made of bronze. Bosio published engravings of many bronze lamps, but these belong to the next section. Sante Bartoli engraved a remarkable bronze statuette which he says was found “in the grottos of the holy martyrs.” It represents St. Peter bearing the monogrammatic cross, a work of the fourth or of the beginning of the fifth century. Buonarroti saw in the Carpegna Museum “many Gorgons’ heads, Jupiter Ammons, Bacchantes, scenic masks, and heads of lions which have served for heads of nails, ornaments of chairs, doors, and the like; and one is especially worthy of note which has a genius with a duck signi-

¹ Bosio, *Rom. Sott.*, p. 21.² *Op. cit.*, p. 509.

fying Winter.”¹ He also mentions hollow balls pierced through which were horses’ trappings. One of these is enamelled in red, blue, and green, and is now in the Vatican. Its style is of the third or fourth century. He describes a bronze shield, with the name of the owner AVRELIVS CERVIANVS, and of the legion XX . V . V, or *Valeria Victrix*, which is not found mentioned after the coins of Cerausius at the end of the third century. Another bronze described by Buonarroti as “found in the sacred cemeteries” is a large *discus* worked on both sides in relief, and representing the Good Shepherd, in the style of the third or fourth century. De Rossi has *R. S.*, iii. 599. seen the impression of this *discus*, or of one like it, on the plaster in the Cemetery of St. Domitilla.

Boldetti gives engravings of several bronze *bullæ*, and heads of nails worked into the forms of Medusa’s heads, masks, and so on. He also furnishes us with examples of boxes, mirrors, tooth-picks, thimbles, *styli*, compasses, saws, keys, large signet seals, and other articles of domestic use in bronze or iron, none of which bear the least mark of Christian art or of a late period. The only Christian bronze found by Boldetti,² is the beautiful disk with the heads of the two chief Apostles, and which is represented in chromolithograph in Plate XXI. 1. This is the most ancient and classical monument remaining of the Apostles’ portraits, and it cannot reasonably be ascribed to a more modern date than the second century, or the beginning of the third. Among all the variety of bronzes found in the Catacombs no examples have been recorded of those little bronze idols which are so common in Roman ruins.

In 1851, De Rossi saw in the Cemetery *Ad duas lauros* a *R. S.*, iii. 600. circular plate of beaten work, about the size of a medal, with the heads of two emperors of the middle of the third century. It is in the Vatican Library, and Baron Visconti pronounces the emperors to be Tribonianus Gallus and Volusianus. In 1852, Padre Marchi picked up, in the Cemetery of Domitilla,

¹ *Vetri*, p. xx. The engraving of it is on p. 426. ² P. 192.

a small bronze plate on which was engraven a minute figure of Roma seated with a globe, and victory in her hand. The impressions of similar figures in relief on bronzes are frequently to be seen on the plaster of the *loculi* in the different cemeteries, and all testify to the style of art being classical or at least of the first four centuries. One of these represents the sacrifice of Isaac in the style of the fourth century, and was seen by De Rossi in a gallery connecting the anonymous area with the great necropolis of St. Callixtus. In the Cemetery of St. Saturninus he saw the impression of a large disk with the emperor M. Aurelius (?) in his triumphal car, crowned by Victory. Among all these bronzes no trace has been found of the works of the barbaric invaders of the Roman provinces in the fifth century, and no remains of the metal work of Merovingian art, so common in the ancient Cemeteries of France.

Glass and
enamel work.
R.S., iii. 601.

We come now to articles formed of glass and enamel. The ancient Romans were accustomed to decorate the walls of their rooms with strips of glass imbedded in them. Pieces of blue and green enamel, and glass medallions, and bits of coloured glass strips are often found sticking in the plaster of the *loculi*. Sometimes they are variegated, or covered with arabesques, or ornamented with flowers and foliage, or figures of fish and other animals. A remarkable disk cut out of a plate of glass, painted with fruit and fish in such a manner that the painting is on one surface and is looked at through the thickness of the glass, was found about four years ago in the so-called Cemetery of St. Saturninus, where it still remains fixed in the plaster of a *loculus*; perhaps the only example remaining of the kind. *Bullæ* and studs of glass are found of the same style and belonging to the same period as those already described among the bronzes. Fragments of small plates and vessels of vitreous composition and enamel are found most abundant in the Cemeteries of Priscilla and Pontianus as in the Etruscan tombs. These green and blue

Bullettino,
1873, 21;
tav. iii., n. 1.

enamels seem to have begun to go out of fashion about the middle of the third century, when white glass, turned and cut by hand with great delicacy, became the favourite mode of decoration. Figures in *intaglio*, letters in relief, and different ornaments in gold-leaf, or little figures attached to the surface of the vase by very fine rivets of glass, became popular in the third and fourth centuries, and fragments of these are more common in the Catacombs than the enamelled glass. The gilded glasses, as will be seen from the chapter devoted to their description, belong to the third and fourth centuries.

Among other specimens of glass found in the Catacombs, we may call particular attention to a very remarkable example found by De Rossi,

Singular glass bowl.

R.S., iii. 326-330.

in 1869, in the triangular tract of galleries which connect the ancient *area*, marked II. in the large Plan, with the central region of the Cemetery of St. Callixtus. The gallery is marked 5 on the Plan; and in the plaster in the corner of a *loculus* in that gallery was found the glass

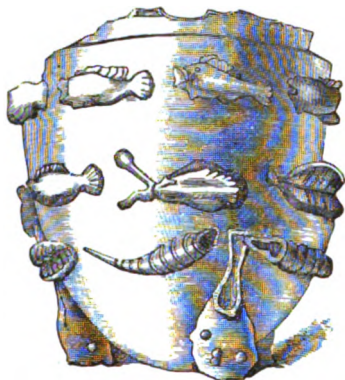


FIG. 113.—Glass Bowl found in St. Callixtus'.

bowl represented in Fig. 113. The portion here represented was entirely imbedded in the plaster, and has been most skilfully detached and cleaned by Padre Tongiorgi, formerly Curator of the Kircherian Museum. The other portion which stood out from the *loculus* has been destroyed by the ruthless barbarism which has worked such havoc in the Catacombs. The bowl is in the form of half an egg, and is of white glass. Three shells of the same material form its feet, and its surface is ornamented with three bands of shells and fishes standing out in high relief. The lowest band, representing the bottom

of the sea, is composed of shells; the middle band is formed of soles and such fish as usually dwell near the bottom; while the upper band is made up of fish of the kind that prefer to swim near the surface. The middle band of fishes are tinted light blue, and so is the rim of the bowl. When this specimen was first brought to light, it was the only example known either in Pagan or Christian art of this kind of glass. In 1875, however, Canon von Wilmowsky discovered, in an ancient Christian cemetery at Trêves, a glass bowl decorated in almost exactly the same manner; the chief difference being the absence of colour, and the somewhat greater freedom of the treatment of deep-sea fish. For further information about this kind of glass and its manufacture, we must refer the reader to the pages of De Rossi.¹ It is sufficient to remark here that it belongs to the category of *diatreta*, and the seat of the manufacture was on the banks of the Rhine, and not in Rome. The period of its being in vogue was from the end of the third century to the middle of the fourth. The Christian cemeteries afford very few examples of *vitrea diatreta*, and hardly one of glass engraved with Christian figures *in intaglio*, although this kind of glass has been found elsewhere, even in Rome among ruins of the latter part of the fourth and fifth centuries. Of glass, with Pagan figures engraved upon it, the examples are numerous in the Catacombs, and still more frequent are the instances in which the plaster of the *loculi* still retains the impression of glasses which have once been there.

R.S., iii. 603.

Glass Phials.
Bullettino,
1873, 20.

Some of the glasses found in the Catacombs have letters in relief stamped upon them, and marks of the factories where they have been made. In a gallery of a portion of a cemetery on the Via Salaria Nuova, belonging to the latter part of the third century, De Rossi found two cups of white glass, with a circlet of Greek letters in relief, bearing the acclamation: *ΠΙΕ ΖΗΧΑΙC, ΠΙΕ ΖΗΧΑΙC ΕΝ ΑΓΑΘΟΙC*, "Drink, and long life

¹ These two bowls are represented in chromolithograph in R.S., iii. tav. xvi.

to you ; drink, and long life to you among 'the good.' M. Detlefsen¹ had collected all the accounts he could find of square or hexagonal phials of flat glass, most of them with long and narrow necks, which are stamped on the bottom with the seal of the glass factory, or perhaps of the perfumer who used them. The chronological dates furnished by this inquiry mark a period embracing the first three centuries of the empire. P. Bruzza has added two examples, probably of the fourth century. The phials of this kind found in the Roman Catacombs have been discovered in galleries belonging to exactly those first three centuries.

Most of the articles in terra-cotta found in the Catacombs come under the head of articles properly belonging to tombs, such as lamps and lacrymatories. Still, there are certain pieces of terra-cotta which do not fall under that category. The large *amphoræ* used for wine or oil are frequently to be met with in the cemeteries, especially in and near the *arenariæ*. The *Agapæ* of the *Ecclesia fratrum* required ample provision of corn and wine and oil, and the *arenariæ* served as cellars and granaries. In the *Gesta apud Zenophilum*,² is an account of a domiciliary visit paid by the municipal officers at Cirta, by Diocletian's orders in 303, *ad domum in quo Christiani conveniebant*, and where they found the bishop and his clergy, and among them several *fossores*. The officers made an inventory of the articles delivered up to them, among which they enumerate *dolia* iv et *orcæ* vi.³

Terra-cotta
amphoræ.
R.S., 605.

¹ *Revue Archeol.*, Sept. 1863, p. 217.

² Alluded to and quoted by St. Augustine in his Donatist Controversies. It is printed in the Appendix to the Donatist Treatises.

³ The inventory is interesting and runs thus :—

"Two golden chalices : *item*, six silver chalices, six silver cruets, a silver bowl (*cucumellam*) ; seven silver lamps, two wax-candlesticks, short brass candlesticks with their seven lamps : *item*, eleven bronze lamps with their chains : 82 women's tunics, 38 veils (*mafortea*), 16 men's tunics, 13 pairs of men's stockings, 47 pairs of women's stockings, 19 countrymen's belts (*copla rusticana*).” They continued their search for the sacred books, and found the cupboards in the library empty, but one of the fossors brought out a

Of these *amphoræ* only one has been found bearing any mark of Christianity. This is in the Lateran Museum, and has on the neck the impress of a seal with the words

SPES I
N DEO

Terra-cotta
plates.

We may divide terra-cotta into ornamental work of fine art, and the common pottery of domestic use. The first comprise the Etruscan vases (*Vase Arretine*), and their imitations, with the factory marks stamped upon them. Of these there are very few specimens in the Catacombs. In fact M. Detlefsen¹ believes their manufacture to have ceased in the second century. Of other ruder kinds of pottery there is no lack of examples, especially in the form of lamps. Now and then some sign or symbol of Christianity appears on pots and platters of terra-cotta,—the jewelled cross with a dove above it, the Agnus Dei with A  Ω on its neck on two fragments in the Vatican Museum, which appear to be of the fifth century,—but there is no proof of their having come from the Catacombs. Little terra-cotta figures have been already mentioned among the children's toys, but figures of other kinds are not so common as might have been expected. The explanation seems to be that Roman terra-cotta figures in the first four centuries were usually idolatrous subjects, and therefore unfitted for Christian cemeteries. Slabs of terra-cotta *bassi-relievi* so frequently used in architectural decoration during the first three centuries are sometimes found in the Catacombs used for closing the *loculi*. De Rossi found one of these, with the consular date of 273 upon it, in the Cemetery of Prætextatus. The sculpture is somewhat rude, and represents sheep in

R.S., iii. 607.

silver capital of a pillar, and a silver lamp, which he said he had found behind a butt. The officers pursued their search, "and when the *triclinium* was opened there were found four jars and six butts (*dolia* iv. *et orceæ* vi.). The Donatist asserted that Felix of Aptonga had said to the officers of Diocletian: "Take the key, and the books that you find in the cathedral (*cathedra*), and the MSS. on the stone, take them away; but take care that the officials do not take away the corn and oil" (*Appendix ad Optat*).

¹ *Loc. cit.*, p. 228.

various attitudes among trees.¹ Possibly the Good Shepherd may have been on the portions now lost. It is impossible to assign a date to ordinary pots and pans, but it is safe to affirm that no certain example of terra-cotta work of more recent date than the fourth century has been found in the Catacombs.

5.—COINS AND MEDALS.

It would not be a fair inference to draw from the coins and medals found sticking in the plaster of the *loculi*, or lying in the grave, that the dates of the burial corresponded with that of the coin. Buonarroti records the discovery, in a cemetery near St. Agnes, around one single tomb, of more than ten medals of different emperors, and belonging to widely-different periods;² coins of Gordian and Severus Alexander (five or six on a string), one of Trajan, one of Severus, and one of Otacilia.³ At the same time, when a medal or coin displays the sharply-cut characters of having come fresh from the mint, there is a probability of its having been placed in the *loculus* shortly after its coinage; and when several coins of the same, or nearly the same, date are found in one *loculus*, it is reasonable to suppose that they were current at the time that they were placed there. Even putting aside these considerations, the coins and medals, taken as a whole, cannot but furnish some chronological limits to the period during which the cemetery in which they are found was used for burial.

Coins and
Medals
R.S., iii. 570.

In the great necropolis of Callixtus, De Rossi has taken note of coins and medals, either still sticking or leaving their impressions in the plaster, of Domitian, Caracalla, Severina (wife of Aurelian), two impressions of the reverse medals of emperors of the third century whose names are not given, of Diocletian, Maximian, Maxentius, and Constantine. Also among the earth have been picked up some thirty

in St. Cal-
ixtus.
R.S., iii. 571-574.

¹ *Inscriptiones*, tom. i. n. 12.

² *Vetri*, p. xi.

³ *Medaglioni*, p. 421.

bronze coins, among which are one of Philip the Younger, two of Claudius (the conqueror of the Goths), one of Probus, two of Maximian, one of Constantius the Elder, one of Licinius, the majority of Constantine and his sons, and one of Valentinian the Elder. Bosio mentions his having found in this cemetery one medal of Caracalla, one of Diocletian, and a remarkable medal inlaid with ivory, which may have been of Constantius II., Magnentius, or Decentius. The famous Carpegna collection, illustrated by Buonarroti, contained medals of emperors and empresses from Hadrian to Constantine, and lastly, Decentius, who was Cæsar in the year 351. Most of these are said by Boldetti to have come from the cemeteries of Callixtus (Domitilla) and St. Helena. Buonarroti testifies¹ that, "Not many medals of Maximianus, Diocletian, or Galerius are found in the sacred cemeteries, because under them was the most fierce persecution that the Church had." Every trace of coins or medals in St. Callixtus has been carefully examined by De Rossi, and yet not one example has been found of the fifth century. Hence, we may safely conclude that the coins and medals of the subterranean Cemetery of Callixtus are comprised within the limits of the first four centuries. The Christian devotional medals of the fifth century have been described by De Rossi, yet no trace of these has been seen in the Catacombs.

Bullettino,
1869, 33-45.

6.—ARTICLES PROPERLY BELONGING TO CHRISTIAN TOMBS.

Lamps

R.S., iii. 609.

The use of lamps, both to illuminate the sepulchral chambers and to honour the dead, was common both among the Pagans and among the Jews from the earliest times. From the Synagogue the custom passed into the Christian Church. The *olea* carried by the Abbot John to Queen Theodelinda in the sixth century testify to the practice of burning lamps before the shrines of the Saints in the Catacombs. But while some of the lamps found in the Catacombs may have been placed

¹ *Medagliani*, &c., p. 384.

there by the devotion of pilgrims long after the disuse of the Catacombs for burial, and others may have been brought there simply for the purpose of giving light in the galleries and chambers, those found within the graves or stuck in the plaster in such a position that they could not have been used for lamps belong to the same category as the other objects treated of in this chapter. The bronze lamps hung of bronze, from chains, described by Bosio and Boldetti, cannot be ascribed with certainty to the time when the Catacombs were used for burial. These would be likely to be removed after the Catacombs were abandoned, but not so the terra-cotta lamps, which were of no value.

A peculiar form of lamp is occasionally found in the Cata- of terra-cotta
combs, in which a hollow tube of terra-cotta rises up from a in various
saucer of the same material, like our flat candlesticks. forms,
These were intended to hold wax candles; and a whole series of such candlesticks were found by P. Marchi stuck in little niches along the walls of a gallery in the Cemetery of Cyriaca; and on the rim of one of them was engraved, in letters of the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century, the acclamation: FELICIO CAECIDEL E VIVAS. But the ordinary form of the Catacomb lamps so well known has but one wick; now and then there are two; and De Rossi has come across one example of a lamp with four wicks. These lamps are great number
found in great quantities. In one single chamber in St. Calixtus, which had been already visited and plundered frequently, De Rossi found more than forty of them. They are found in Europe, Asia, and Africa; but until the fifth and sixth century Rome appears to have been the great centre of their manufacture. They are found among the ruins of all ancient buildings both within the city and near the cemeteries; a considerable number were brought to light in the recent excavations in the Coliseum. A few years ago Cav. Guidi found some hundreds of them on the Aventine, all marked with Christian
with Christian symbols.
symbols. The

Bullettino,
1867, 15;
1870, 80-84.

R.S., iii. 615.

most ancient lamps made in Roman potteries with Christian symbols are those of the factory ANNI SER, many of which have the figure of the Good Shepherd crowned with grapes and vine leaves. It is impossible to determine who this Annius Servianus (?) was, but the pottery is of the best style of the second century. It is found in ancient palaces in Rome, Ostia, &c., and was found by Bosio in the Catacombs. De Rossi himself found a lamp with this mark in St. Domitilla. Many other factories of Christian times produced lamps, more or less rude, with animals (sometimes symbolical, sometimes not), fishes, birds, quadrupeds, reptiles; with palm trees and palm branches, vases, shells, and very rarely ships. Very many of these have the monogram or signs of the name and cross of Christ. The crosses are, in some instances, jewelled, and even sometimes on a staff. Biblical subjects are not frequent on these lamps; and when they occur, are of the rudest kind, and testify to a period about coeval with the Gothic kingdom. An evident type of the fifth or sixth century is one of Christ trampling upon the asp, the basilisk, the lion, and the dragon. The portraits of the Apostles are more ancient, and some bear the likeness of the emperors and empresses of the fifth century.

Generally
plain,
R.S., iii. 613.

Now, in the Cemetery of Callixtus, De Rossi has observed that the greatest number of lamps are quite plain, without any symbol at all; some have rude figures of animals, symbolical or indifferent, or else a shell. Not a few have the monogram , some the monogrammatic cross , but not one has the jewelled cross, or any other emblem or trace of the factories of the middle of the fifth century, and later. This is not an isolated case, for De Rossi avers that, during more than thirty-five years of observation, upon the multitudes of lamps that have come under his eyes, only one cross with a staff has been seen by him, and that in the great vestibule of the Cemetery of Domitilla, discovered in 1865. Three little lamps with jewelled crosses have been lately found in the Cemetery of

Ostrianus. In the interior of the galleries, he does not remember one example of a lamp with a cross upon it; and of other lamps of the style of the fifth and sixth centuries, he has certainly never seen a single instance, while he has frequently come across lamps with the monogram in both forms—**✠** and **P**. An examination of the writings of Marangoni, Bartoli, Boldetti, and Bosio lead to the conclusion that, when they speak of lamps with the cross upon them, they mean the monogram.

On the other hand lamps of more ancient form and work- and of ancient
manship have been seen and described by these writers. I.e. type.
Blant has observed that the lamps of the fourth and later centuries have the handle solid, while those of earlier and more classical times have the handle perforated, often in elegant shapes. Sometimes lamps of distinctly Pagan design are found in the Catacombs. De Rossi found one with a figure of Venus on it, apparently of the fourth century. The early Christians do not seem to have had much scruple in using utensils with Pagan emblems upon them.

Both in the Christian subterranean cemeteries and in those Ampullæ.
R.S., iii. 616. in the open air we find little vases and *ampullæ* of glass and terra-cotta of various forms, placed for the most part in the tomb, and near the head of the deceased. In the Middle Ages it was customary to place a little vessel of holy water in the tomb, but we have no ancient authority for supposing this to have been the case in the first five or six centuries; so that Bosio's conjecture as to this being the purpose of the little vases in question cannot be established. Some of them, doubtless, have once contained blood of the martyrs, but these shall be examined in a future chapter. We are, at present, examining their form rather than their contents, in order to determine, as far as possible, their antiquity. As may be seen from the engravings in the works of Bosio, Aringhi, and especially of Boldetti, these *ampullæ* are found in forms of the utmost variety. A visit to the Christian

R.S., iii. 620.

Museum in the Vatican Library, or to the Kircherian Museum at the Collegio Romano, or to the store of relics at the Cardinal Vicar's palace will show us the originals in still greater variety. Glass balsam-pots, often called lachrymatories; ointment bottles of the shape called *alabastrum* and *guttus*, sometimes in stone or enamel; *ampullæ* in the form of masks, little barrels, fish, pomegranates; *patæræ*, *calices*, *canthari* or *scarabæi*, *scyphi* and every sort of drinking-cup; flasks, sometimes covered with straw, like Florence-flasks now for wine or oil, little amphoræ, and other wine bottles of every pattern are to be found among them, but all are of ancient types, and such as come from the imperial potteries of the first four centuries. In 1829, a small bronze pail with its handle was found near a *loculus* in the Cemetery of St. Hippolytus. Kettles and basins of bronze, like those found at Pompeii, were in 1852 brought to light in a chamber of the Cemetery of St. Agnes (Ostrianum), and are now in the relic-room of the Cardinal Vicar. De Rossi thinks it not unlikely that these utensils may have been used for the *agapæ*. Now if these vessels be compared with the vases found in the Franco-Gallic or the German tombs of the Merovingian era, it will be seen that the latter are of a much ruder and quite different workmanship from these Catacomb vases; while the Gallo-Roman vases of the fourth century are of the same character as these which we are now describing.

The late Abbé Cochet, Inspector of Historical Monuments of the Seine-Inférieure, gives, in "*La Normandie Souterraine*," numerous illustrations of the pottery found in the Gallo-Roman Cemeteries at Cany, Dieppe, Fécamps, &c.; and also of the Franco-Merovingian tombs at Londinières, Envermen, and other places. The former are simply Roman of the first four centuries. The latter have a totally different kind of decoration, "all is essentially barbarous, and is evidently the style of the Carlovingian and Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. Even if in some of them the form and lightness reveal the ancient

model, yet in others we remark a thickness and clumsiness that we never see in the Gallo-Roman pottery, however common."¹

We have selected at random from the above work a group



FIG. 114.—Specimens of Gallo-Roman Glass and Pottery. Fourth Century.



FIG. 115.—Specimens of Merovingian Pottery and Glass. Sixth or Seventh Century.

of specimens of each kind of pottery and glass work, and our readers can see at a glance the great difference between the two styles.

Bosio, Aringhi, and Boldetti have described various instru- Instruments of Torture.

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 231.

ments of torture, found inclosed in the *loculi* of the martyrs. De Rossi himself found in a tomb under the floor of a chamber near the crypt of St. Cecilia a large hollow ball of brass filled with lead, and attached to a bronze chain, and also one like it of smaller size. Even supposing the larger one to have been the weight of a pair of scales, still there are examples in the Acts of the Martyrs of these weights being used as instruments of torture. The ancient Acts often mention the fact of the *plumbatae* and other instruments of torture having been purchased by the faithful, and carefully deposited with the martyr's body in the grave. Bosio found "in the head of a martyr firmly fixed the iron of a hatchet."¹ The learned archæologist Olivieri writes: "When I was a youth in Rome, there was extracted from one of the ceme-teries (I forget which) the body of a holy Martyr, whose thighs and legs were missing, but running through his skull was a nail a palm and a half long, and two other similar nails among the ribs of his breast. This remarkable relic was deposited by my uncle, Mgr. Olivieri, in the Pontifical Sacristy on Monte Cavallo."² De Rossi himself says, "Many times even in our own days have we had the opportunity of seeing and handling the material proofs of the mutilations and various tortures undergone by those buried in the Rôman Catacombs; and of the religious care of the ancient Christians in gathering up all that they could of the mangled bodies, and the mutilated limbs, and depositing them in an honoured place, and wrapping them in precious coverings." At the same time he is very careful to observe that it would be rash to regard as instruments of torture all the sharp-pointed articles found in the *loculi*. For instance, a bronze *stylus* was found a few years ago apparently sticking in the skull of a woman, but it was probably only a hair-pin. Nails were sometimes placed in Pagan tombs for certain symbolical reasons, and a similar explanation may sometimes account for their presence in

A.S., iii. 622.

¹ Rom. Sott., p. 21.

² Memorie di S. Terenzio, p. 101.

Christian graves. Some bronze claws (*ungulae*) were long, preserved in the Christian Museum at the Vatican, and have been engraved by Perret and others, but they really came from a Pagan Etruscan tomb.

We have now briefly passed through the various classes of objects found in the Catacombs, with the exception of the gilded glasses, to which we devote a separate chapter. We shall then be in a position to inquire into the purpose for which these objects were placed in the Catacombs, and also to weigh the chronological value of the whole mass of these various objects as affording an indication of the period during which the Catacombs were used as places of burial.

CHAPTER II.

GILDED GLASSES FOUND IN THE CATACOMBS.

Gilded Glasses in various Museums—Description of them—Their manufacture and date—Subjects depicted on them: Pagan, social and domestic, Jewish, but most frequently Christian—Description of some of them—Christ, the B. Virgin, the Saints—SS. Peter and Paul: a very frequent subject—Their Feast at Rome—Ancient portraits of these Apostles—St. Peter under the type of Moses on glasses, sculpture, and paintings, proofs and illustrations of this—Remarkable glass recently brought from Dalmatia—Large patena with small medallions let into the glass, example found at Cologne—Glass chalices—Use of glass patena.

Gilded glasses. **W**E have reserved a separate chapter for the gilded glasses found among the various objects adhering to the plaster of the *loculi* in the Catacombs, because they are almost exclusively Christian in their design and workmanship, and thus differ from the greater part of the objects among which they have been found. Unfortunately in many cases no record has been preserved of the localities from which they were taken. The largest collection of them is in the Christian Museum in the Vatican Library. Smaller collections may be found in the Kircherian Museum at the Roman College, and in the Museum of the Propaganda. The British Museum possesses about thirty specimens, the Museums of Paris, Florence, and Naples, not so many. Among private collections, Mr. C. W. Wilshire's in this country is probably one of the best; it contains about twenty specimens, the more important of which are at present in the Loan Collection of the South Kensington Museum.

Description
of glasses
found in the
Catacombs.

These glasses are, the greater part of them, evidently the bottoms of drinking cups. Their peculiarity consists in a

design having been executed in gold-leaf on the flat bottom of the cup, in such a manner as that the figures and letters should be seen from the inside, like the designs on the glass bottoms of the ale tankards so popular at Oxford and Cambridge. The gold-leaf was then protected by a plate of glass, which was welded by fire so as to form one solid mass with the cup. These cups, like the other articles found in the Catacombs, were stuck into the still soft cement of the newly-closed grave; and the double glass bottom, imbedded in the plaster, has resisted the action of time, while the thinner portion of the cup, exposed to accident and decay by standing out from the plaster, has in almost every instance perished. Boldetti informs us that he found two or three cups entire, and his representation of one of these is given in Padre Garrucci's work.¹ Even the bottoms of these glass cups have frequently perished in the attempt to detach them from the plaster, and the impression left in the cement is often all that remains to show the loss sustained by Christian archæology.

The discovery of these glasses is coeval with that of the Catacombs themselves. Bosio found five or six fragments of them during all his researches on the Via Appia and Via Ardeatina, and then found an equal number of whole unbroken specimens in a single gallery on the Via Salaria; and when Aringhi published the drawings and descriptions of these, he added an account of a few others that had been discovered since. Buonarroti's work contains an account of about seventy specimens, which were all that were known in his time. Boldetti added about thirty more. Padre Garrucci, however, has obtained accurate drawings of all the specimens now extant in the various museums of Europe, so that in his publication we have a full collection of about 340, twenty of which, however, only exist in the pages of Boldetti, Olivieri, and other authors. Modern exploration has not brought to light many new specimens. In the course of thirty-three

Their discovery by Bosio and others in Roman Catacombs.

¹ *Vetri ornati di figure in oro.*—Tav. xxxix. nn. 7 a, 7 b, first edition.

Two found
at Cologne.

years of labour in the Catacombs, De Rossi has only come upon four fragments, and two or three have been brought to light by the excavations recently made at Ostia. Until 1864 not a single specimen had been discovered except in the neighbourhood of Rome, but in that year a very remarkable fragment of a gilded glass plate was found at Cologne in excavating the foundations of a house near the Church of St. Severin; and in 1866 another, though of a different workmanship, was discovered, together with some charred bones, in a rough stone chest about thirty inches in length, and fifteen in width and depth, in a similar excavation near the well-known Church of St. Ursula and her companions. This last specimen is now in the Slade Collection in the British Museum; and a woodcut of the other is given in page 320.

The art of
making them
known only
in Rome;

These two exceptions scarcely seem sufficient to overthrow the general opinion of archæologists that Rome was the only place where this kind of glass was manufactured. Garrucci has, indeed, adopted a further conclusion, and considers the art to have been confined to the Roman Christians. It is, however, exceedingly improbable that the Christians should have been acquainted with any ornamental art which was unknown to their Pagan contemporaries. Besides, several of the figures represent gladiatorial combats and scenes from Pagan mythology, such as no Christian artist of the early ages would have thought of depicting, nor can either the figures or the inscriptions which accompany them be in any way adapted so as to bear a Christian signification. Buonarroti, in his work on the glasses,¹ gives engravings of three glasses of much more elaborate workmanship, in which the glass has been cut, and the gold-leaf has been carefully coloured and shaded, and sometimes silver is used instead of gold. These are all family groups, representing a boy GERONTIVS, a man named SITTACVS, and CERICIA his wife, and a carefully-drawn portrait of a man and his wife with their little boy in front of them. There is

¹ Osservazioni, &c., Tav. xxv.

nothing to show that these specimens are Christian, except, perhaps, the absence of the *nomen* and *cognomen* in the two first. How, then, it may be asked, are we to account for the fact of these glasses scarcely ever having been found except in Christian sepulchral crypts? We acknowledge the fact, but deny the inference; for it is no less a fact that these glasses have never been discovered in any Christian building or sepulchre *above ground*, and yet we know that from very early times, and more especially after A.D. 312, the Christians possessed many places of burial which were not subterranean. That no such glasses have come down to us from antiquity, except those found in the Catacombs, is to be ascribed to their extremely fragile nature, which the peculiar circumstance of their having been imbedded in mortar alone preserved from destruction. Cavedoni conjectures, with much probability, that vessels of glass thus ornamented have been destroyed in great quantities for the sake of the gold which they contained, and this conjecture is confirmed by one or two instances recently found, in which some of the gold-leaf has been scraped away with an instrument forced in between the plates of glass.¹ The Jews, "dealers in broken glass," who plied their trade in Trastevere, even in the days of Martial,² may have had some share in producing the scarcity of specimens of this kind of manufacture.

It is difficult to determine precisely the period to which these glasses are to be assigned. Olivieri discovered one in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, "in the middle of which was represented a heap of money, and in the centre of the heap, on the top of all the rest, was to be distinguished the head of Caracalla."³ Another glass bears the name of Marcellinus, who was martyred under Diocletian in A.D. 304.⁴ From an

Bullettino,
1864, 82.

and practised
in the third
and fourth
centuries.

¹ Cavedoni, Osservazioni, &c., p. 6, &c., quoted in *Bullettino*, 1864, p. 82.

² Transtyberinus ambulator,
Qui pallentia sulphurata fractis
Permutat vitreis.—*Epig.* i. 42.

³ Garrucci, Tav. xxxiii. n. 5.

⁴ *Ib.*, Tav. xix. n. 3.

examination of the style of dress, and of the mode of arranging the hair, as also from the orthography of the legends and other indications, Padre Garrucci considers them all anterior to the time of Theodosius; and De Rossi speaks more precisely, assigning them to a period ranging from the middle of the third to the beginning of the fourth century. Professor Babbington, in Smith's Dictionary of Christian Antiquities (GLASS), has refuted the late Mr. Wharton Marriott's supposition, that these glasses were made in the sixth century. We do not consider it necessary to notice Mr. Parker's speculations about their origin and date.

Subjects depicted on them.

Pagan.

The subjects depicted on them are more varied than those painted on the walls of the Catacombs. A few are, as we have already mentioned, scenes from Pagan mythology: Hercules, Achilles, and Pagan gods and goddesses. Others represent boxers contending for the prize, charioteers, and hunting scenes; a shipbuilder with his men variously employed; a money-coiner, a tailor, and a druggist, each in his shop. Domestic scenes from the nursery and the schoolroom are also here to be met with; a father and mother, with one or more of their children in front of them; or still more frequently, a husband and wife, standing side by side, sometimes with hands joined over the nuptial altar, which is generally presided over by Christ, either represented by His monogram , or else in His own Person crowning the married couple. In one instance, it seems to be an angel instead of Christ, who is assisting at the union; but it is quite possible that this may be a Pagan scene, and the winged figure may be intended for Cupid. Five or six specimens exhibit the seven-branched candlestick, the ark containing the rolls of the law, and other Jewish symbols; but the great majority are manifestly Christian.

Social and domestic.

Jewish.

Most frequently Christian.

Three of these, of which two are in the possession of Mr. Wilshire, have one or two figures in the centre, and, grouped around these, a number of subjects from Holy Scripture.

Thus in one,¹ in the Kircherian Museum, we have Christ with the rod of power changing the water into wine ; Tobias with the monster fish ; Christ with the rod of power enabling the paralytic to carry his bed ; and lastly, with the same rod of power protecting the Three Children in the flaming furnace of Babylon. Another, now in the possession of Mr. Wilshire,² has the Apostles Peter and Paul in the centre, and the six compartments around them contain successively figures of the

Description of
some of these.



FIG. 116.—*Gilded Glass representing Marriage.*

Three Children ; a man supposed by Garrucci to be the prophet Isaias, with a roll of a book taken out of a chest, and a symbolical figure of the sun ; then a female figure praying, possibly the Virgin, whose maternity the prophet saw in vision ; next a man, probably the prophet Isaias, being sawn asunder by two executioners ; then another man with a rod and a serpent in front of him, probably Moses and the brazen serpent, which our Lord tells us was a type of Himself ; and

¹ Garrucci, Tav. i. n. 1.

² *Ib.*, *loc. cit.*, n. 2.

lastly, Moses striking the rock. This and the following glass may be seen in the South Kensington Museum.

The third, of which we give a representation, has in the centre a man and his wife, with the legend *PIE ZESES, Drink, and long life to thee.*¹ Around this family group are arranged the Scripture subjects of the fall of Adam and Eve, the sacrifice of Abraham, Moses (or Peter) striking the rock,²



FIG. 117.—Gilded Glass with Biblical Subjects.

the paralytic carrying his bed, and the raising of Lazarus. Between each of these groups appears the figure of Christ with the rod of power in His hand. If we may venture to interpret the series as a whole, we see here sin, represented by the fall of our first parents, but the remedy promised at

¹ See p. 308, note.

² This is clear from the other glass in the South Kensington Museum.

once ; the sacrifice for sin, typified by Isaac ; absolution, under the symbol of the paralytic to whom it was said, "Son, be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee ;" and the complete deliverance from death the wages of sin, foreshadowed in the resurrection of Lazarus.

These and other Scriptural subjects, such as Noe in the Ark, the sacrifice of Isaac, the destruction of the dragon by Daniel, and the history of Jonas, are found sometimes singly, and sometimes together. Our Lord is frequently represented as the Good Shepherd, or as multiplying the loaves, or changing the water into wine ; but in this latter miracle the number of water-pots is invariably represented as seven instead of six, apparently to signify that the symbolical meaning of the miracle as a type of the Holy Eucharist was principally in the artist's mind.

The Blessed Virgin is represented sometimes alone, with her name over her head, praying between two olive trees ;

Figures of Saints.

sometimes with the Apostles

Peter and Paul on either side of her ;¹ sometimes

accompanied by the virgin martyr St. Agnes. St. Agnes

is found on several glasses with similar variations.²

Other Saints, as SS. Lawrence, Vincent, Hippolytus,

Callixtus, Marcellinus, Sixtus, Timotheus, &c., are

found more rarely. But

the favourite subject is evidently the representation of the two great Apostles SS. Peter and Paul.



FIG. 118.—*Gilded Glass in the Louvre Museum.*

Those who have passed a summer in Rome will not easily forget the enthusiasm with which the Romans still keep the *feasts* of their great patrons. Even the vast Basilica on the

Feasts of SS. Peter and Paul

¹ See Plate XXII. 1.

² Plate XXII. 2.

Vatican appears full of citizens in gala dress, when they listen with proud satisfaction to the glorious hymn :

“ O felix Roma ! quæ duorum Principum
Es consecrata glorioso sanguine,
Horum cruore purpurata cæteras
Excellis orbis una pulchritudines.”

at Rome in
fourth century.

The sermons of St. Leo the Great, and the poems of Prudentius, show us with what solemnity the festival was observed in the fourth and fifth centuries. “ The people flock together,” sings the latter, “ for more than ordinary joys. Tell me, my friend, what this may be? They run to and fro through the whole of Rome, and shout for joy, because to us this festal day of the Apostles’ triumph has come again, this day ennobled by the blood of Peter and of Paul.”¹ These festivities were then, as now, apt to run into excess, and hence St. Jerome, while thanking Eustochium for her childish presents of sweetmeats, adds the caution, “ It is the feast and birthday of Blessed Peter . . . and therefore we must take all the more care that we keep this solemn day not so much with the abundance of our food, as with the gladness of our souls. For it is very absurd to propose with over-eating to honour a martyr, who you know pleased God by his fasts.”² St. Augustine laments the dishonour done by scenes of riot to the Saints, “ whom drunkards now persecute with their cups, as much as the furious Pagans used to pursue them with stones ;”³ and he specially mourns over the scandal given by the wine-bibbing in “ the Basilica of St. Peter,”⁴ where *agapæ* were celebrated in the portico for the benefit of the poor. Paulinus of Nola tells us how the *agapæ* thus degenerated, how “ the table of Peter receives what the teaching of Peter denounces,” and at the same time he draws a graphic picture of a *fešta* in the fourth century. “ Among the crowds

¹ Peristeph. xii.

² Ep. xxxi., ad Eustochium.

³ Enarr. in Ps. lix.

⁴ Ep. xxix., ad Alypium, § 10.

attracted thither by the fame of St. Felix," he says,¹—and with one alteration we may fairly transfer his description to Rome on the 29th of June,—“there are peasants recently converted who cannot read, and who, before embracing the faith of Christ, had long been the slaves of profane usages, and had obeyed their senses as gods. They arrive here from afar, and from all parts of the country. Glowing with faith, they despise the chilling frosts;² they pass the entire night in joyous watchings; they drive away slumber by gaiety, and darkness by torches. But they mingle festivities with their prayers, and after singing hymns to God, abandon themselves to good cheer. They joyously stain with odoriferous wine the tombs of the Saints. They sing in the midst of their cups, and by their drunken lips the devil insults St. Felix. I have therefore,” continues the good bishop, “thought good to enliven with holy pictures the whole temple of St. Felix. It may be, when the sight of them strikes their astonished minds, these coloured representations will arrest the attention of the rustics. Inscriptions are placed above the pictures, in order that the letters may explain what the hand has depicted. While they point them out to one another, and read by turns these pictured objects, they forget their eating till a later hour. The enjoyment of the sight beguiles their hunger, better habits are formed in these gazers, and studying these sacred histories, chastity and virtue are engendered by such examples of piety. . . . And as they spend the day in gazing more and more, their potations become less frequent, and only a short time remains for their repast.”

Whether the same idea of restraining the potations of the Roman Christians, by depicting figures which could only be seen to advantage when the glass was empty, suggested the

Figures of
SS. Peter
and Paul in
glasses.

¹ Poema xxvi. (*aliter* xxxv.) ; De Felice, Natal., carm. ix. v. 541, *seqq.*

² The *contadini* who spend the vigil of SS. Peter and Paul on the steps and under the colonnade of the Piazza di San Pietro are not in danger of frost.

use of these gilded cups, we shall not pause to inquire. It is at any rate certain that the feast of SS. Peter and Paul was observed as a general holiday in Rome during the fourth century, very much as Christmas is now amongst ourselves, and the representation of the two Apostles on eighty glasses out of the three hundred and forty published by Garrucci, is a strong argument of their having been intended in some way or other to commemorate that day. The inscriptions, where they occur, with the figures of the Apostles, confirm this supposition, for they are all of a convivial character. We give a few examples—DIGNITAS AMICORVM PIE ZESES CVM TVIS OMNIBVS BIBAS. DIGNITAS AMICORVM PIE ZESES CVM TVIS OMNIBVS BIBE ET PROPINA. CVM TVIS FELICITER ZESES. These may be translated—“*A mark of friendship,¹ drink,² and [long] life to thee, with all thine. Mayest thou live [long.]*” “*A mark of friendship, drink, and [long] life to thee, with all thine, drink [or, live] and drink to my health.*” “*Mayest thou live happily with thine own,*” or, more freely, “*Life and happiness to thee and thine.*” A more religious inscription has:—HILARIS VIVAS CVM TVIS OMNIBVS FELICITER SEMPER IN PACE DEI ZESES, that is, “*Joyfully mayest thou live with all thine; happily mayest thou live for ever in the peace of God.*” Doubtless in Rome many a pious pilgrim followed the practice which St. Monica learned in Africa, of whom St. Augustine records, with the playful fondness of filial affection, that she

¹ DIGNITAS AMICORVM appears to have been equivalent to the phrase *Digni amici*, with which a Roman host was accustomed to pledge his guests before drinking their health. Perhaps it would have been more exactly rendered by “*Here’s to our friendship.*” The phrase is evidently alluded to by St. Augustine in the passage quoted below, where *dignationem* stands for the honour paid to the Saints by St. Monica with her cup of wine. The same word is often used by Tertullian, St. Cyprian, and other African writers.

² PIE, ZESES, for *πίε, ζήσῃς*, Greek words in popular use in Rome. BIBAS may be understood as it stands, or as written for VIVAS. The latter is more in conformity with the spelling on the inscriptions in the Catacombs, in which VIXIT is usually written BIXIT.

used to bring to the festivals "a small cup of wine, diluted according to her own abstemious habits, which for courtesy she would taste (*unde dignationem sumeret*). And if there were many shrines of the departed Saints to be honoured in that manner, she would carry round that one same cup which she used everywhere; and this, even when it had become not only very watery, but unpleasantly lukewarm, she would distribute to those about her by small sips, for she sought their devotion, not pleasure."¹ De Rossi inclines to the opinion that these glasses served for these purposes at the tombs of the Apostles.

A question here naturally arises as to the representations of the Apostles, how far they may be considered to be real likenesses, or whether they were purely conventional, invented and perpetuated merely by Christian art. We have seen the testimony of Eusebius that he had "seen representations of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and of Christ Himself, still preserved in paintings."² St. Augustine says that people "in many places used to see them (Peter and Paul) represented in pictures with Christ. For Rome, in a specially honourable and solemn manner commends the merits of Peter and Paul on account of their having suffered on the same day."³ St. Ambrose, in his account of the vision which he had of SS. Gervasius and Protasius, adds that there appeared "another third person, who seemed to be like Blessed Paul the Apostle, whose countenance I had learned from pictures."⁴ Moreover, it cannot be denied that there is a certain uniformity of type about the figures of these Apostles on most of the glasses of which we are speaking, so that they might often be distinguished, even if there were no legends over their heads.

The oldest representation of them now extant is probably on bronze medallion.

¹ Conf. vi. 2.

² Hist. Eccl., vii. c. 18.

³ De Consens. Evang., i. 10.

⁴ Cujus me vultum pictura docuerat.—Epist. 53.



Bullettino,
1864, 85.

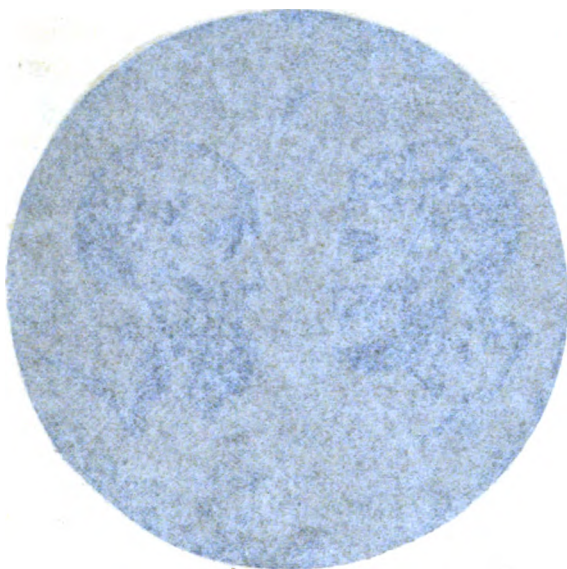
that on a bronze plate preserved in the Vatican Library.¹ This medallion is about three inches in diameter; it is cut with a die or with a hammer, and finished with a chisel. De Rossi says: "It is certainly a work of a classical type, and of a style rather Greek than Roman. In order to determine with more or less exactness the date of so rare and unique a monument of the likenesses of the Apostles, one would be obliged to produce some similar bronze-work of Pagan art, and of a certain or approximately-known date; or else to place it side by side with the plastic works of the second or third century, to one of which centuries our bronze undoubtedly belongs. . . . It is enough to say that to every eye, practised in the study of the monuments of Pagan and Christian art in the third century, it is evident that this bronze is not more modern than about the time of Alexander Severus." De Rossi contrasts with it a mutilated fragment of a bronze plate of about the same size, which is of immensely inferior workmanship, and which he assigns to the fourth century. Buonarroti² gives a representation of a medal of M. Aurelius and L. Verus with busts of the two emperors in exactly the same attitudes as the Apostles here, with the consular date of A.D. 162, but inferior in style to the medallion under consideration. Professor Babington has hazarded the conjecture "that the style of the medal bespeaks the age of the Renaissance; it is most probably of the fifteenth century, or thereabouts."³ We think he would not have ventured to express this suspicion had he remembered that Boldetti⁴ himself extracted this bronze from the Catacomb of Domitilla, and that De Rossi has seen the impressions of similar medallions in the plaster of *loculi*. The portraits on this bronze are very lifelike and natural, bearing a strong impress of individual character. One of the heads

¹ See Plate XXI. 1.

² Osservazioni sopra Medagl, tav. iv. 2.

³ Dict. of Christian Antiquities (GLASS), p. 733, note.

⁴ Osservazioni, p. 192.



[illegible]

1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered.

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$$Z = 0.146 \pm 0.004 \text{ (stat.)} \pm 0.004 \text{ (syst.)} \pm 0.004 \text{ (th.)} \pm 0.004 \text{ (Asy.)} \pm 0.004 \text{ (MC)}$$
⁴ 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995.



is covered with short curly hair, the beard clipped short and also curled, the features somewhat rough and commonplace. The features of the other are more noble, graceful, and strongly marked; the head is bald, and the beard is thick and long. This valuable medal confirms the tradition preserved by Nicephorus¹ of the personal appearance of the two Apostles, the first being that of St. Peter, and the latter that of St. Paul; and, as we have already said, these characteristics



FIG. 119.—*Gilded Glass with Heads of SS. Peter and Paul.*

are in the main retained in most of the glasses, excepting a few which are of very inferior execution. The two Apostles are represented side by side, sometimes standing, and some-
variously represented
on glass,

¹ See also St. Jerome, Comment. in Ep. ad Galat., i. 18, tom. vii. p. 329, ed. Migne. It is a curious coincidence also that in the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, edited by Tischendorf, it is said of Dioscorus, the ship-master, who had followed St. Paul to Rome, and was mistaken for the Apostle and beheaded in his stead, that he was bald, "*καὶ αὐτὸς ἀναφαλαντὸς ὑπάρχων*," p. 4.

sometimes
symbolical of
Roman
Church.

times seated. In some instances Christ is represented in the air (that is, from heaven, as it were), holding over the head of each a crown of victory; or, in other instances, a single crown is suspended between the two, as if to show that "in their death they were not divided." This crown becomes sometimes a circle surrounding the labarum or , which is often supported on a pillar, thus symbolising "the pillar and ground of the truth," which is "that very great, very ancient, and universally-known Church founded and organised at Rome by the two most glorious Apostles Peter and Paul."¹ For there certainly seems to be good ground for Mr. Palmer's conjecture,² that in some of these glasses the Roman Church is intended to be symbolised in the persons of her founders and patrons, rather than the Apostles themselves to be represented personally. In this way we can account for their being placed on either side of the Blessed Virgin,³ of St. Agnes, or of other Saints, who have their hands uplifted in prayer, whilst the Apostles are not in the same attitude, and moreover, are made to appear of very diminutive stature. It can never have been intended to represent St. Agnes as superior to the chiefs of the Apostles, or as making intercession for those who had "finished their course" more than two centuries before her. Rather, we understand St. Agnes, St. Peregrina, and the rest, even our Blessed Lady herself, as praying for the Roman Church which these Apostles had founded, and through it for the Church at large. St. Agnes was always accounted a very special ornament and glory of the Roman Church, and we have certain proof of the Roman Christians of the fourth century asking her prayers, in the inscription by Pope Damasus, still to be seen at the entrance of her church *fuori le mura* :—

¹ St. Irenæus, Hær. iii. 3.

² Early Christian Symbolism, p. 21. While these pages are passing through the press, this accomplished scholar, learned antiquarian, and most kind friend has departed this life. *Requiescat in Pace!*

³ See Plate XXII. 1.



UT DAMASI PRECIBUS FAVEAS PRECOR, INCLYTA VIRGO.

"I pray thee, O noble Virgin, to listen favourably to the prayers of Damasus."

She was also represented alone¹ upon these glasses almost more frequently than any other Saint excepting the two Apostles of whom we have been speaking.

The relative positions of these two Apostles, in ancient works of art, have been a subject of frequent discussion ever since the days of St. Peter Damian. It seems impossible, however, to establish any theory upon them. St. Peter is generally at the right hand, but by no means always so; and if any one attempts to prove from this that the Roman Christians looked upon the two Apostles as in all respects equal and co-ordinate, he is met by the fact;—First, that our Lord Himself is found once standing on the left of St. Paul; St. Agnes, too, in the place of honour, where she appears with the Blessed Virgin; and husbands, often placed on the left of their wives: moreover, that Pagan artists, when they placed Jupiter between Juno and Minerva, observe the same indifference as to the relative position of the two goddesses; and that the Seal of the Papal Bulls to this day represents St. Peter on the left hand. And secondly, that the primacy of St. Peter is distinctly attested in some of these glasses by another symbol which can hardly be misunderstood. We mean those in which he appears under the type of Moses striking the rock. The rock, of course, at once suggests the passage of St. Paul: "They drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ;" but we should hardly have ventured to affirm that the figure striking the rock was St. Peter, if his name had not, in two instances at least, been unmistakably given at his side. One of these glasses has been long known to antiquarian visitors to the Vatican Museum,² and within the last few years a second, preserved in the same place, but whose

St. Peter
under the type
of Moses;

Bullettino,
1868, 43.

¹ See Plate XXII. 2.

² See Plate XXII. 2.

surface had become corroded and opaque, has been cleaned and rendered transparent by Professor Tessieri. It does not differ in any essential respect from the other, yet there is just sufficient difference to indicate the hand of another artist.

The glasses explain the paintings and sarcophagi.

These invaluable glasses supply us with a key to many of the paintings in the Catacombs and sculptures on Christian sarcophagi, where the same scene is so frequently repeated. They show us that St. Peter was considered to be the Moses



FIG. 120.—Bottom of a Gilded Glass found in the Catacombs, and lately cleaned and restored to the Vatican Museum.

of "the new Israel of God," as Prudentius speaks, and they explain the reason why the rod, the emblem of Divine power, is never found except in three hands, those of Moses, Christ, and Peter. It belongs primarily, and by inherent right, to Christ, the eternal Son of God. By Him it was of old delegated to Moses, of whom God testified, "He is most faithful in all My house."¹ For a few years the rod of power was

¹ Num. xii. 7; compare Heb. iii. 5, 6.

visibly wielded by the Incarnate Word; and when He withdrew His own visible presence from the earth, "afterwards," to use the words of St. Macarius of Egypt,¹ "Moses was succeeded by Peter, to whom is committed the new Church of Christ, and the new priesthood." We understand, also, that it is not without reason that in the sarcophagi the figure striking the rock is almost invariably found in immediate juxtaposition with the prince of the Apostles led captive by the satellites of Herod Agrippa, and there is frequently a studied similarity in the features of the principal figure in both scenes. Perhaps the most striking example of this is to be found in a sarcophagus of the fourth century, a photograph of which forms the frontispiece to this volume, where the likeness between the two figures is unmistakable. Mr. Parker, from whose collection of photographs this is taken, describes it thus: "St. Peter striking the rock, and bringing out the Stream of Life, at which the Jews are drinking. The arrest of St. Peter."² Another example may be seen in the large sarcophagus which stands at the end of the principal hall in the Lateran Museum. In one of the four compartments into which the front of that sarcophagus is divided, we have an epitome of St. Peter's life. First, he stands with the rod of power, already given to him by his Divine Master, who is warning him of his fall, symbolised by the cock at his feet. Next, he is taken prisoner by the satellites of Agrippa, but he still bears the rod, for "the Word of God is not bound," and no worldly violence can wrench the rod of jurisdiction from him to whom Christ has given it.³ Lastly, he appears under the symbol of Moses,

also in sculpture on sarcophagi,

¹ Hom. xxvi. c. 23. St. Bernard speaks of the Pope as "primatu Abel, gubernatu Noe, patriarchatu Abraham, ordine Melchisech, dignitate Aaron, auctoritate Moyses, judicatu Samuel, potestate Petrus, unctione Christus." *De Consid.*, lib. ii. 8.

² Parker's *Funeral Sculpture*, Plate XIX.

³ There must have been some special cause for the frequent repetition of this scene. The most reasonable explanation is that St. Peter's imprisonment and miraculous deliverance, after which "he went into another place" (Acts xii. 17), was the occasion of his coming to Rome, where the same

using the rod to bring from "the Spiritual Rock" the streams of grace, at which the Israel of God slake the thirst of their souls; or, to use the words of St. Cyprian, "It is preached (by this eloquent stone) that the Jews, if they thirst and seek after Christ, shall drink together with us, that is, shall obtain the grace of Baptism."¹

and in frescoes
in Catacombs.

We have already seen that the same idea runs through the paintings in the earliest *cubicula* of the Catacombs. All sacramental grace is there represented as flowing from that one stream over which Peter presides. Early in the fifth century, St. Augustine expressed the same idea when, writing to Pope Innocent I., he said, "We do not pour back our streamlet for the purpose of increasing your great fountain, but we wish it to be decided by you whether our stream, however small, flows forth from that same Head of rivers whence comes your own abundance."² And in his reply the Pope says of St. Peter, "from whom the very Episcopate, and all the authority of this name (of the Apostolic See) sprung . . . that thence all other churches might derive what they should order; whom they should absolve; whom, as bemired with ineffaceable pollution, the stream that is worthy only of pure bodies should avoid; just as from their parent source all waters flow, and through the different regions of the whole world the pure streams of the fountain well forth uncorrupted."³

In the glass in the Vatican Library, of which Fig. 121 is a representation, with the lost fragment supplied, the lower portion represents the Lamb standing upon Mount Sion (Apoc. xiv. 1), from whence, as from Paradise, flow forth the four

scene was enacted again and again in the apprehension and martyrdom of so many of his successors. The parallel event in the life of St. Paul (his imprisonment and deliverance at Philippi) is nowhere reproduced in early Christian art. See Palmer's "Symbolism," p. 18.

¹ Epist. lxiii. 8.

² S. Aug. Epist. clxxvii. vol. ii. p. 938, ed. Gaume.

³ Inter Epist. S. Aug. 181; ib. p. 949. See Note A. in Appendix II. to Vol. I., on the *Chair of St. Peter*, and its connection with the Baptismal Font in the Vatican, Vol. I. p. 490.



using the rod to bring from "the Spiritual Rock" the streams of grace, at which the Israel of God shake the thirst of their souls; or, to quote the words of St. Cyprian, "It is preached by this eloquent stone that the Jews, if they thirst and seek for Christ, shall drink together with us, that is, shall obtain the grace of Baptism."¹

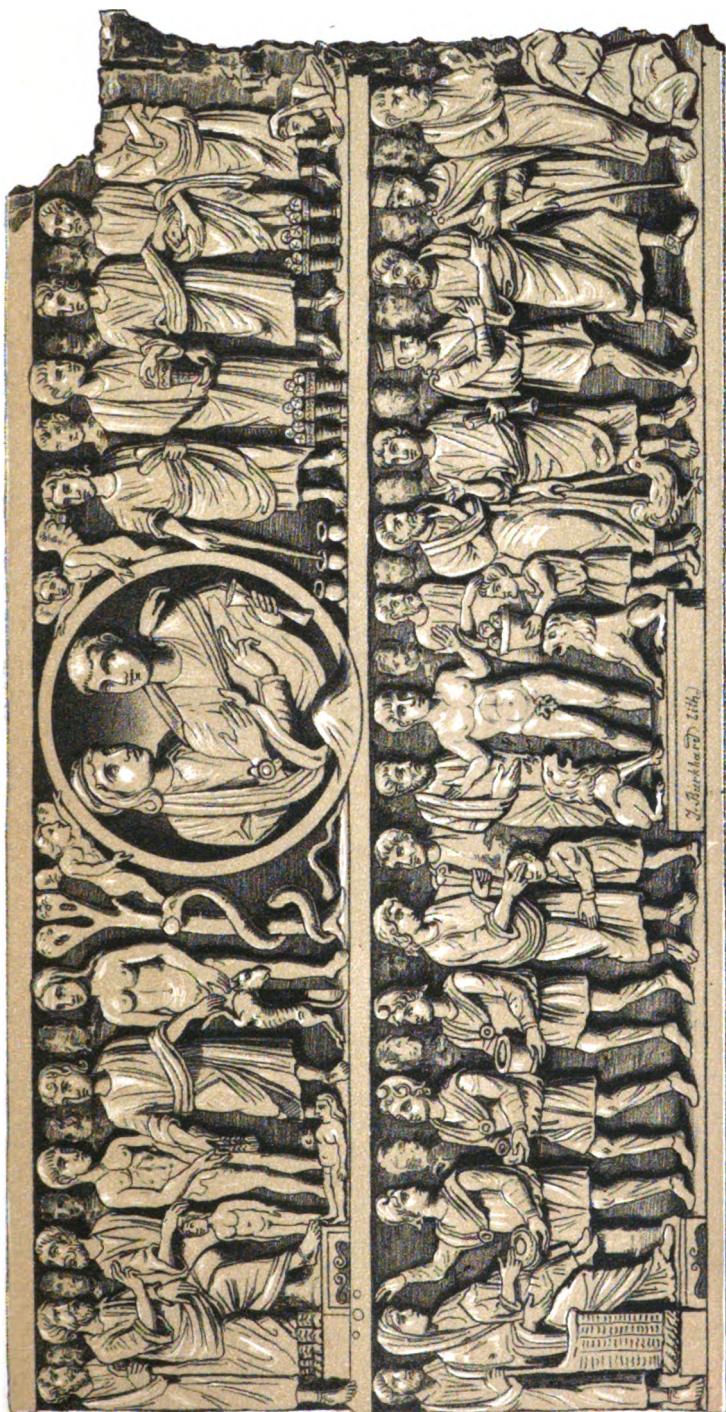
We have already seen that the same idea runs through the paintings in the earliest *catacombs* of the Catacombs. All sacramental grace is there represented as flowing from that of stream over which Peter presides. Early in the fifth century, St. Augustine expressed the same idea when, writing to Pope Innocent I., he said, "We do not pour back our streamer for the purpose of increasing your great fountain, but we wish it to be decided by you whether our stream, however small, flows forth from the same Head of rivers whence comes your own abundance."² And in his reply the Pope says of St. Peter, "from whom the very Episcopacy, and all the authority of this name (of the Apostol. See) spring . . . that from a Mother church might derive that they should order; who . . . should dissolve, whom, as bound with an inviolable apostolicum, the stream that is nothing only of pure bodies should . . . as from the parent source all waters flow, and thence to the different regions of the whole world the waters of the Christian world forth in confluence."³

On the glass in the Vatican Library, of which Fig. 120 is a representation, with the lost fragment supplied, the lower portion represents the Lamb standing upon Mount Sion (Apoc. xiv. 1), from whence, as from Paradise, flow forth the four streams which encircle him and which in the apostolic mission and in a tyrannical sealant of his successors. The parallel event in the life of St. Paul is his appointment and deputation at Thessalonica, which is now the reproducible of the same art. (see Eusebius "Syntaxis," p. 11.)

Epist. ix. c. 8.

St. Aug. P. S. C. vol. vi. p. 938, ed. Ga. 17.

³ Inter. Epist. St. Aug. 181; lib. p. 610. (see Note A in Appendix B to Vol. I, on the *Chron. of St. Peter*, and its connection with the Baptism of Pont in the Vatican, Vol. I, p. 210.)



Evangelical streams, which unite in the mystical Jordan (IORDANES), the waters of Baptism. On either side of the Lamb of God are the faithful, Jews and Gentiles, coming forth from the two cities, Jerusalem (IERVSALE) and Beth-lehem (BECLE). These two cities appear in the mosaics of St. Maria Maggiore, SS. Cosmas, Damian, and Mark. In the mosaic placed by Celestine I. in St. Sabina, the Apostles



FIG. 121.—Gilded Glass in Vatican Library.

SS. Peter and Paul are represented with a woman under each—*ecclesia ex circumcisione*, and *ecclesia ex gentibus*—a pictorial version of Gal. ii. 7-9. The apse of the Basilica of St. Felix of Nola must have been decorated with a similar scene, for St. Paulinus describes it thus :—

“ Petram superstat ipse Petra Ecclesiæ,
De qua sonori quatuor fontes meant,
Evangelistæ viva Christi flumina.”

This symbolism was perfectly familiar to the Christians of the third century. Thus St. Cyprian writes to Julianus (Ep. 73): "The Church setting forth the likeness of Paradise, includes within her walls fruitful trees. . . . These trees she waters with four rivers, that is, with the four Gospels, whereby, by a celestial inundation, she bestows the grace of saving Baptism." The upper part of the glass represents Christ standing on the mountain of glory, at the foot of which the Jordan flows in seven streams, and giving commission to St. Peter, with the cross, the sign of his martyrdom, and to St. Paul. The palm-tree, the symbol of fruitful life, rises behind each Apostle as the result of his labours, with the Phoenix standing at its summit, the Clementine symbol of the Resurrection.¹

Glass Plate
from Podo-
goritza.

Bullettino,
1877, p. 79, &c.

A striking confirmation of the interpretation of the symbol of Moses as a type of St. Peter is supplied by a large glass plate brought by M. Basilewsky from Podogoritza, the ancient Doclea in Dalmatia, and described by De Rossi with an engraving of the exact size of the original. The plate is $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter, of white transparent glass, scratched with rude figures representing Scriptural subjects arranged in a circle round a central group of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, somewhat after the fashion of the gilded glass in Fig. 117. We have Daniel with a lion on each side of him, and the words DANIEL DE LACO LEONIS (*Daniel from the lions' den*); then the Three Children, with the title, TRIS PVERI DE IGNE CAMINO (*Three Children from the furnace of fire*); next a woman with her arms extended in prayer, and the legend, SVSANA DE FALSO CREMINE (*Susanna from the false accusation*); then comes a boat, from which Jonas has been thrown, and swallowed by a monster, who gazes at him under the gourd, with the words DIUNAN DE VENTRE QVETI LIBERATVS EST (*Jonas from the whale's belly was delivered*). Then we have the fall of our first parents, with the words ABRAM ET FI [*lius—Adam et*] EVAM (*Abraham and his Son—Adam and*

¹ See above, p. 56.

Eve). The resurrection of Lazarus follows, with the words, DOMINVS LAZARVM (*The Lord [raises] Lazarus*).

Finally, we have the following scene traced from De Rossi's Cursive engraving, with the legend in cursive characters, which De writing.
 Rossi has deciphered thus: *Petrus virga perquodset, fontis ciperunt quorere*,—that is, *Petrus virga percussit, fontes cæperunt currere*—"Peter struck [the Rock] with the Rod, and the streams [of grace] began to flow." The rudeness of the drawing makes the rock look more like a tree, but the legend leaves no room for doubt about the meaning. De Rossi has



FIG. 122.—Part of Engraving on Glass Plate from Podgoritza.

not yet given to the world his judgment as to the exact date of this precious relic of antiquity, which the archæological zeal of M. Basilewsky succeeded in rescuing from Serajevo just at the commencement of the Eastern war, but he is justified in saying: "This testimony which comes to us from the East of Illyricum, sets the seal with dazzling clearness to the truth of the Moses-Peter, whom the Roman monuments had first revealed to Padre Marchi of illustrious memory."

Among the glasses delineated by P. Garrucci may be noticed a great number of very small size. These had been supposed to belong to glass cups of small dimensions; but a careful
 Large patena with small medallions let into the glass.

examination of them, especially since the discovery which we have mentioned of the fragments of a glass plate at Cologne, has proved that they once formed parts of similar *patena*. It

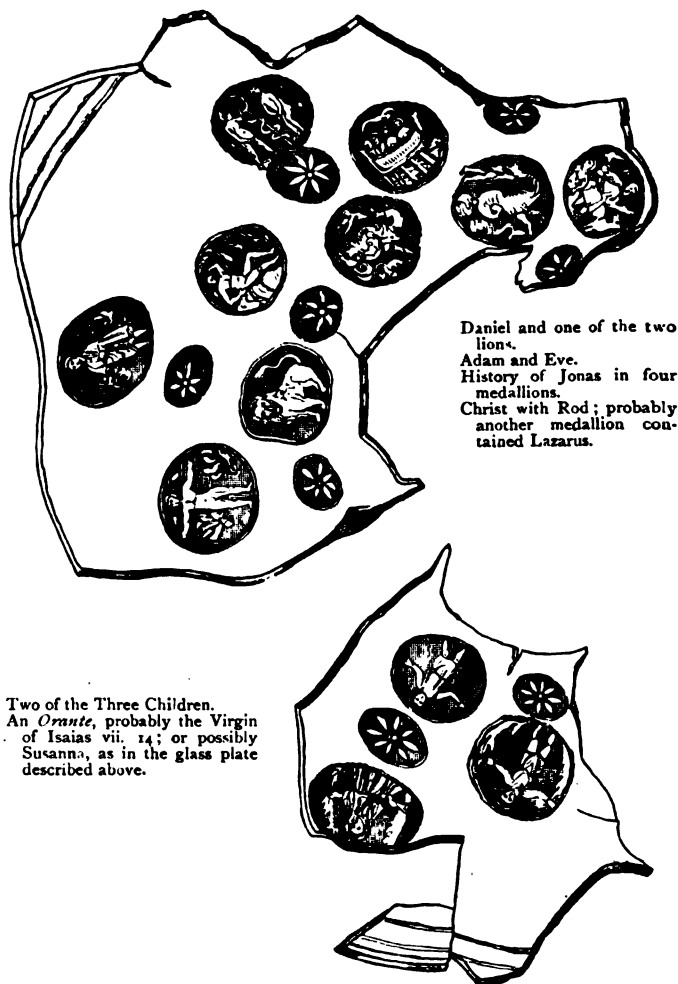


FIG. 123.—Fragments of a Glass Patena found at Cologne.

will be observed that they rarely contain a whole subject at once. Thus one of them will contain the figure of Adam,

another that of Eve, while the tree and the serpent coiled round it will be represented on a third. The Three Children are each on separate glasses, while our Lord is represented about a dozen times standing alone with a rod in His hand, while on other glasses are to be seen the paralytic carrying his bed, Lazarus as a mummy at the door of his sepulchre, and the rock with the stream issuing from it. It is true that sometimes these small glasses have been taken out of the series to which they belong. Thus, one published by Garucci in Tav. iv. 9, which is in the Vatican, was found in the plaster round a child's grave, in the Cemetery of St. Priscilla, surrounded with a circle of iron with a ring by which it had been hung round the neck as a medal; and yet the subject is one of the three Magi. But the general use of these small glasses is proved by the fragments discovered at Cologne, of a flat plate about ten inches in diameter made of clear glass, into which have been inserted, while in a state of fusion, a number of small medallions of green glass exactly similar to those found separately in Rome, and which together form a series of Scriptural subjects. These medallions, being of double glass, have resisted the ravages of time and accident which have destroyed the more thin and fragile glass of the *patena*. De Rossi has seen in the plaster of *loculi* in the Catacombs the impression of large plates of this description, which have probably perished in the attempt to detach them from the cement.

Bullettino,
1864, 89-91.

We have alluded to the probable use of these glasses at the *agapæ*, and the subjects on many of them suggest their having been also used on other festive occasions, as marriages, birthdays, &c. It is, however, a more interesting question to consider whether it is not possible that some of them may have been used as patens or chalices in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The well-known passage in which Tertullian scoffs at the Roman Pontiff for painting on his chalice the figure

Glass chalice.

of the Good Shepherd,¹ would lead us to suppose that the chalices of the second and third century must have been frequently of similar material and workmanship to the glasses of which we are treating. The celebrated *Graal* or *Sacro Catino*, preserved at Genoa, which is supposed to have been the chalice used by our Saviour at the Last Supper, and in search for which so many romantic adventures were encountered by legendary knights, is of glass, and of hexagonal form ; but it would not be safe to deduce any archæological argument from so doubtful a relic.² The *Liber Pontificalis* says of St. Zephyrinus, that "he made it a constitution of the Church, that ministers should carry *glass patens* into the Church in front of the priests, while the bishop celebrated mass with the priests standing before him, and that in this manner masses should be celebrated, care being taken for what belonged to the rights of the bishop, that the clergy only should take away for all present the Holy Loaf (*coronam*) consecrated by the bishop's own hand, and that the priest should receive It to administer It to the people." About twenty years afterwards, St. Urban "made the consecrated vessels all of silver, and set apart twenty-five silver patens." From these notices later writers, such as Honorius of Autun, have affirmed that "the Apostles and their successors celebrated masses in wooden chalices ; Pope Zephyrinus in glass ; but Urban, Pope and martyr, ordained that the Holy Sacrifice should be offered in gold or silver chalices and patens."³ The passages, however, do not bear out so absolute a limitation of the period of glass chalices to the few years between Zephyrinus and Urban. It is not said that the latter Pope forbade the use of chalices of less precious materials ; it is merely stated that he provided sacred vessels of silver, and especially a number of patens

¹ "Ipsæ picturæ calicum vestrorum, si vel in illis *perlucet* interpretatio," &c. ; and again, "pastor quem in calice depingis."—*Tert. De Pudicit.* 7-10.

² See Didron, *Christian Iconography*, vol. i. p. 270, note (Bohn's trans.)

³ *De Gemma Animæ*, i. 89.

corresponding to the number of the city *tituli*. The history of St. Sixtus II. and St. Laurence shows that the treasures of the Church were constantly liable to confiscation, and it would have been as impossible to ensure the sacred vessels being always of the precious metals in Rome during the ages of persecution, as it is now for those Christian communities which groan under the bondage of Mohammedanism.¹ When happier days came, and the munificent gifts of gold and silver chalices displaced the glass vessels, it was not at all unlikely for some of the latter to be put up as tokens of affection and distinction on the tombs of the departed, and hence it is quite possible that some of our glasses may be fragments of chalices.

The *patenæ vitreae* which St. Zephyrinus required, belong to a different category. They were not for the use of the celebrant bishop or priest; but, in conformity with that ancient practice which required all the priests in cathedral cities on Sundays and great festivals to assist at the bishop's mass, St. Zephyrinus ruled that the priests of the several *titles* should be attended on such occasions by a minister with a glass *patena*, in which a requisite number of consecrated hosts (made then in the form of the Roman circular biscuit *ciambella*, and hence called *corona* ²) should be placed at the bishop's mass, and taken by the priests to be administered to the faithful in the different parishes, who thus signified their union with the bishop by "being all partakers of that one Bread" consecrated by his hands. "Take heed," says St. Ignatius of Antioch, "that you have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and one chalice in the unity of His blood. One altar, as there is but one bishop, with the priests, and the

Glass *patena* and their use.

¹ The present writer once received a visit from a Coptic priest, who begged earnestly to have given him for a chalice one of the ale-glasses which he saw on the table of the Nile-boat saloon. Glass chalices are universal throughout Egypt in the Coptic churches.

² See above, Fig. 99, p. 250.

deacons, my fellow-servants.”¹ Now, the fragments of the two large *patenæ* discovered at Cologne, correspond exactly to the kind of glass paten here mentioned. The Scriptural subjects, and the absence of any allusions to secular feasting, accord well with so sacred a purpose, and we may therefore fairly presume that those other smaller glasses which we have mentioned may also be remains of the *patenæ* used to convey the Blessed Sacrament from the Pope’s altar to the parish churches in Rome. Padre Garrucci thinks this not improbable, although he does not admit that any of our Catacomb glasses ever formed portions of Eucharistic chalices. The *patena* found near the Church of St. Ursula differs from the other discovered two years before, in having the subjects depicted in gold and colours on the surface of the glass, instead of being within medallions of double glass. The drawing is also in a better style of art.

¹ St. Ign. ad Philadelph. c. 4 ; compare ad Smyrn. c. 8 :—“ Let that be deemed a sure Eucharist which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it.”

CHAPTER III.

PURPOSE AND CHRONOLOGICAL VALUE OF THESE VARIOUS ARTICLES.

Purpose for which these articles were placed in the Catacombs—Theories of Severano, Boldetti, Marangoni, and Buonarroti—Untenable theory of Raoul-Rochette—Buonarroti probably correct in thinking these objects sign-posts—Pagan ornament on them accounted for—Chronological value of these articles—Conclusion of De Rossi.

THE immense variety of the articles found in the Catacombs, and the little connection which the greater part of them have with funereal purposes leads us to inquire, What purpose was intended by those who placed them in these subterranean galleries? Severano, the editor of Bosio's great work, Boldetti, and Marangoni, regard them simply as ornaments of the graves, and testimonials of affection from the living to the dead. Buonarroti considers them principally as sign-posts, so to speak, by which the particular *loculus* might be identified by friends who wished to visit the last resting-place of their beloved one; and adds that the Christians "took anything that came to hand, or that they found in the house, without reflecting what sort of thing it was, whether Pagan or Christian, whole or broken, or rather they preferred broken articles and of small value, since they were lost and could serve for nothing else."¹ Raoul-Rochette, on the other hand, maintains that the sepulchres of the ancient Egyptians, Asiatics, Greeks, Etruscans, Italians of every race, and Romans, prove that they used to furnish the abodes of the dead with the same articles that he loved when living, and that the Christians

Theories
about the
Objects.

¹ Vetri, p. xi.

continued the same practice.¹ Cavedoni, in opposition to the ingenious French *savant*, has fallen into the exaggeration of attempting to prove the Christian symbolism of almost every article found in the Catacombs. De Rossi considers that the opinion of Buonarroti is the nearest to the truth, and shows strong reasons against the theory of Raoul-Rochette.

Raoul-
Rochette's
theory
untenable.

The great difference between the pagan and the Christian furniture of the tomb was this ; that the pagans used to arrange the various articles within the tomb, or on little tables or brackets around the dead, as if for his use and convenience, whereas in the Christian cemeteries these articles are found stuck in the plaster outside, so as to strike the eye of the living, rather than to serve for the use of the dead. Buonarroti cites two stones which record the *signum loci*,—ZINNVM LOCI, and the TITVLV(s) marked with the *signum navem*,—SIGNV(m) NABE(m), with a ship carved upon it. The same learned author also points out the strange variety of these articles, many of them having no possible connection with the associations of life or things dear to the deceased, and quantities of them being in fragments and mere rubbish taken by chance, evidently without any special intention. We cannot judge of the mass of these objects by the engravings published by Boldetti of those which are the least injured. The sight of the broken bits of every kind, fixed in the plaster in exactly the same way as the comparatively perfect specimens, is far more convincing as to the purpose for which they were placed there.

The recently discovered Cemetery of Generosa, most of the *loculi* in which are still intact, furnishes us with one of the best examples of this mode of distinguishing particular graves. Some have fruit-stones stuck in the plaster, some twigs and leaves of trees and plants, the impressions of which still remain, others have tusks and teeth of quadrupeds, or bones

¹ See *Troisième Mémoire sur les Antiquités Chrétiennes des Catacombes*, par Raoul-Rochette. Paris. 1838.

of animals ; snail-shells, oyster-shells, very rarely used to make an ornamental cornice as in the *nymphæum* of a private house, but generally singly and irregularly stuck in without any attempt at an ornamental pattern. Such were the ordinary means used by the ancient Christians, at the time of burial when the cement was still moist, to mark the graves of their friends. Now and then, as we have seen, more precious objects were used for the same purpose, and in the case of children, toys and such articles as they had perhaps used when living were left to mark more clearly their last resting-place.

If these considerations suffice to convince us that the purpose of these objects was distinctive rather than religious, we shall not be surprised that so few traces of Christianity appear upon them. We know that St. Clement of Alexandria recommended Christians to adopt symbols reminding them of their faith on rings and other personal ornaments ; but we cannot suppose that, in times of persecution, it would be possible for Christians in general to carry out this suggestion. They would naturally use the same articles of personal and domestic ornament or utility as their pagan neighbours, and would not necessarily cast away a valuable cameo because it had a mythological subject engraved upon it. And what they ordinarily used, they would naturally employ to mark the tomb of their dead. There is one noteworthy exception. We do not find among all the fragments of every kind of utensil any certain piece of a heathen idol, although pagan tombs and houses are full of such figures. The Acts of the *Quattro Coronati* who suffered under Diocletian show us the distinction, which was well understood by the early Christians, between mythological ornaments and idolatrous figures. The four Saints in question were sculptors by profession. They were accustomed to make fountains in the form of shells ornamented with figures of Victory and Cupids, *Victoria et Cupidines*. They were ordered to make a statue of Esculapius

Pagan ornament accounted for.

to be placed in a temple. They refused, and this refusal was the occasion of their martyrdom. Mythological representations of the heavens, of the sea, and of rivers are found even in Christian sarcophagi of the fourth century. We need not therefore be surprised to find them on the objects affixed to Christian tombs, although it is somewhat startling to find a figure of Venus on a silver ornament bearing the acclamation : *Vivas in Christo*. A few years ago some small Egyptian idols were supposed to have been found in the Catacombs, but on closer examination they turned out to be figures of Lazarus in his grave-clothes coming out of the sepulchre.

Chronological
value of these
objects.

The purpose intended by the early Christians in thus marking their graves must, however, remain to some extent a matter of conjecture. But the testimony borne by these objects to the chronological period at which the *loculi* were used for burial is clear and certain. Whether we examine the consular dates on those epitaphs which contain them, or question the stamps of the Imperial potteries on the tiles which close the *loculi*, or whether we pass in review each class of objects that have been stuck into the plaster at the time of burial, from the valuable cameo or the emperor's medal to the smallest fragment of terra-cotta, the testimony is invariably one and the same. No object has ever been found in the *loculi* or *arcosolia* of the subterranean cemeteries which can be shown to be of a more modern date than the first ten years of the fifth century,—not even the lamps which might easily have been fixed in the walls after the cemeteries had ceased to be used for burial. On the other hand, the mass of articles of every kind of use or ornament belonging to the first three centuries is enormous, less numerous are those belonging to the age after Constantine, while indications of the sepulchres and relics of martyrs are by no means rare.

De Rossi, in his enumeration of the various classes of objects described in the three preceding chapters, takes care to keep steadily before us the probable date of each article,

and has devoted special attention to those objects that belong to the age of Constantine, and might seem to be assignable to a later date. But the more closely the examination is made, the stronger is the evidence that the general conclusions as above stated are correct. With his usual caution, the conscientious Roman archæologist admits that, in so vast a collection of objects, some may have escaped even his keen observation, and he adds: "Still less do I pretend that nothing *R. S., iii. 624.* will be noticed or discovered in time to come, which may seem to, or actually may form a partial exception to one or another of the leading observations which I have set forth and illustrated. In human affairs exceptions to rules must always be foreseen as possible, and sometimes even probable. But let present and future explorers of the Roman Catacombs, in the particular cases which they may stumble upon, apparently in contradiction to the great chronological system set forth and briefly summed up by me, let them examine with due attention the reality of the fact and all its circumstances, in order to determine whether the exceptional case be true and undoubted and whether (as often happens) as the schoolmen say, it be not *exceptio quæ firmat regulam.*"

CHAPTER IV.

THE BLOOD-STAINED PHIALS FOUND IN THE CATACOMBS.

Blood of Martyrs carefully preserved—Often in vessels of glass and terracotta—These vessels often found in Catacombs by Boldetti, Marangoni, &c.—Remarkable case of liquid blood in a glass phial found in 1872—Chemical and Microscopical analysis—Importance of this analysis—Testimony of F. Marchi, of Leibnitz—Decree of Sacred Congregation of Relics in 1668—Renewed in 1863—Vessels stained red with wine—P. de Bück's theory of Eucharistic or Agape wine untenable—Some ampullæ contained balsam—General Conclusion.

Value
attached to
blood of
Martyrs.

OF all the objects found in the Catacombs none have excited so much interest as the traces of the blood of the Martyrs. Pagan Rome is said in the Apocalypse to have been “drunk with the blood of the Saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus,”¹ and we have already adduced testimony to show how literally this was true.² More than one Roman Pontiff has responded to a request for relics by giving the petitioner a handful of the soil of Rome thus empurpled with their blood. Boldetti has drawn out at great length the proofs, from the Acts of the Martyrs, of the devotion with which the faithful braved every danger, in order to treasure up if possible every drop of that precious blood that was shed for Christ, and has shown how frequently the cloths steeped in it were buried in the grave with the martyr's body. Prudentius describes how the scattered remains of St. Hippolytus were carefully gathered up by the faithful, and how the very sand on which his blood had been sprinkled was taken up in napkins, “lest that [sacred] dew should remain on the profane dust. And if any of his blood had spurted out hot

¹ Apoc. xvii. 6.

² Part I., pp. 306–309.

upon stakes, a sponge was applied and took it all away."¹ Just as in another poem he describes how the faithful of Saragossa kissed with devotion the still bleeding wounds of St. Vincent, and how "multitudes stain their linen robes with his dripping blood, in order to preserve it in their homes as a sacred protection for their descendants."²

We have already described how the cloths steeped in the blood of the virgin martyr St. Cecilia were found in the sixteenth century in the same coffin with her still incorrupt body.³ St. Gaudentius of Brescia teaches us that it was not merely ordinary devotion to the relics of the Saints that prompted the faithful thus to place the martyr's blood in his tomb: it was the most authentic record of his martyrdom. Speaking of St. Nazarius and others, he says: "We preserve their blood collected in gypsum, and require nothing more. We preserve their blood, which is the witness of their Passion."⁴ And in the same way St. Ambrose says of SS. Gervasius and Protasius: "The tomb drips with blood, the triumphant marks of blood appear. . . . I found the appropriate signs; all the bones entire, and a great quantity of blood."⁵ Boldetti says that he often found such blood-stained cloths in the Catacombs.⁶

The sacred blood of the martyrs was not only preserved in sponges, cloths, and on the objects which had been sprinkled with it. The faithful often placed it in glass or terra-cotta vessels of different forms and sizes. Thus, in the account of the discovery of the relics of St. Marcian, who suffered under Hadrian at Tortona, by Bishop Innocentius in the middle of the fourth century, we read: "They found a glass vessel full

Often preserved in vessels of glass or terra-cotta.

¹ Peristeph. xi.

² "Plerique vestem linteam
Stillante tingunt sanguine,
Tutamen ut sacrum suis
Domi reservent posteris."

—Peristeph. v. 341.

³ Part I., 321.

⁴ Serm. in Ded. Bas. SS. xl. Mm.

⁵ Epist. lib. vii. ep. 54.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 149.

of his blood, and also the sponge with which the Blessed Secundus (himself a glorious martyr) collected his blood, and deposited it near his body.”¹ Boldetti describes a bottle found by him in the Cemetery of Basilla or *Ad Clivum Cucumeris*, beneath the vineyard Pariola belonging to the Collegio Romano, affixed, as he says, to the grave of a martyr, and in the endeavour to detach it from the plaster the vessel broke, and inside of it was a sponge steeped in the martyr’s blood. Boldetti gave this precious relic into the hands of Pope Clement XI. Nicephorus mentions the blood of St. Euphemia having been “taken up and divided in small glass vessels.”² In 1675, in the works undertaken for the restoration of the High Altar in St. Maria ad Martyres, commonly called the Pantheon, there was found a leaden casket with the bodies of SS. Rassius and Anastasius translated from the Catacombs and deposited there by Boniface IV. On opening this casket, Cardinal di Carpegna found seven *ampullæ* of the blood of the martyrs with their relics, placed there (it is reasonable to suppose) in testimony of their martyrdom. Boldetti describes, among other relics which he was commissioned to examine, vessels of glass with blood in them. “In one *ampulla*,” he says, “the blood was liquid and red, as if it had just issued fresh from a wound.”³ These relics came from Castello di Fiano about twelve miles from Rome.

See in Boldetti, p. 156.

These vessels often found in Catacombs.

These and other instances mentioned by Boldetti are confirmed by the testimony of Aringhi, Landucci, and Marangoni, who have all left descriptions of vessels of glass and terracotta, which they have examined with their own eyes, and in which the blood has been found still in a liquid state. Thus Marangoni writes: “In the lower part of the Cemetery of St. Saturninus we found a *loculus* closed with tiles, and distinguished outside by a small glass vessel stained with blood. When the tomb was opened, at the feet of the martyr was

¹ Acta SS. Martii, tom. i. 422.

² Hist. Eccl. xviii. 31.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 156.

found a glass *ampulla* of spherical form still more than half full of liquid blood so that the red part of the blood lay at the bottom, and the watery or serous part floated above it. When the *ampulla* was shaken, both parts were so mixed that the whole appeared blood, and after a time when allowed to



FIG. 124 —Phials with traces of blood in them ; from Boldetti.

stand the white serous fluid again separated from the red blood. The neck and mouth of the *ampulla* appeared sprinkled all over with drops of blood, and the mouth was stopped with a little tufa stone also stained with blood.”¹

¹ Acta St. Victorini, p. 66.

Marangoni also found a similar *ampulla* containing liquid blood in the higher part of the same cemetery, and four years afterwards, in 1742, again in this part of the cemetery he came upon another "glass *ampulla* almost full of liquid blood, the upper portion of which was *serum*, and a yellow liquid at the bottom. It was placed in the midst of four *loculi*, in one of which were three bodies of martyrs. The neck was sprinkled all over with fresh blood (*vivo sanguine*)."¹ Marangoni had the good fortune to find the third and fourth *aræ* of this cemetery intact and unspoiled by previous explorers. In fact, in this same place was found, in 1872, an *ampulla* containing sanguineous matter, which has been subjected to the most careful and rigorous chemical and microscopic analysis. We propose to condense as closely as we can Cav. Michele De Rossi's account of this remarkable discovery.

Ampulla recently found with blood in it.

In the cemetery called by the name of St. Saturninus, beneath the Villa Potenziani, now the property of the King of Italy, about a mile out of Rome on the Via Salaria Nuova, some excavations were made in 1872, for the foundations of a new building, and the workmen dug down to the fourth and fifth *piano* of the Catacomb. Here they destroyed some hitherto intact *loculi*, in one of which they found a glass bottle $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches high containing a semi-liquid fluid looking like blood. The glass, of a greenish tint, but quite transparent, represented in the adjoining woodcut reduced one half, was in a state of very perfect preservation, and only oxidised at the bottom where it rested on the floor of the grave. This fact proves that the atmosphere of the spot must have been peculiarly dry and well-adapted for the preservation of anything left there. The workmen, out of curiosity to know the nature of the fluid, diluted it with water in which the blood speedily dis-

¹ Cod. Vatic. 8324, *e schedis Marangoni*. De Rossi reminds us of what St. Ambrose noticed in the tomb of the martyr Nazarius: *vidimus sanguinem martyris ita recentem, quasi eadem die fuisset effusus*.—Paulinus in *Vita St. Ambrosii*.

solved, and a few flies found their way into the flask. Eventually, the workmen brought the bottle to Father Tongiorgi, who communicated the discovery to the brothers De Rossi.

The liquid was then submitted for microscopic examination to Count Francesco Castracane degli Antelminelli, conjointly with Doctor Domenico Colapietro for the chemical analysis. The observations were repeated frequently during three consecutive days, and Professor Gaetano Tancioni assisted at the examination, together with Michele De Rossi, who drew up the *procès verbal* of the result. It was the first time that a

vessel from the Catacombs containing liquid had been found in a state capable of being submitted to so thorough a scientific examination. The result was as follows.



FIG. 125. Glass Bottle containing blood, found in 1872.

The Chemical Analysis.

1. The liquid, which fills about two-thirds of the glass, is of a blackish-red colour and very watery. It has the appearance of blood decomposed and much diluted in water. Left for some time quiet it is seen to form at the bottom a thick deposit, which has all the external characteristics of blood.

2. We took an ounce of this liquid and evaporated and dried it up, so as to form a shining solid pellicle: and this pellicle we exposed to a red heat in a platinum tube. It emitted an ammoniacal smoke, with a very strong smell of animal matter.

3. The same operation repeated on other portions of the liquid taken from the surface, the bottom, and the middle of the fluid, always manifested the same results. This repetition

was necessary to convince us that the above-mentioned vapour could not have been due to the presence of some of the flies which had got into the bottle.

4. To the pellicle mentioned in No. 2 we applied a drop of nitric acid, and the result was a complete reduction to ashes, during which we observed the development of a light vapour. We then dissolved the ashes in a solution of hydrochloric acid and water, and the result was a liquid, which with the addition of sulpho-cyanuret of potassium became the colour of red blood, as takes place in the solution of the salts of peroxide of iron.

5. The appearance of the reaction produced in proportion to the quantity of liquid analysed agrees exactly with the quantity of iron which ought to manifest itself in an equal quantity of blood.

6. From these chemical data we conclude that we had to do with a liquid of positively animal character, and which, by its physical appearance and by the quantity of iron contained in it, is clearly shown to be blood.

Microscopic Analysis.

1. Having searched to discover if there was any trace of sanguineous globules, we proved that the degree of decomposition to which the liquid had arrived was such that we could not discern any traces of such globules.

2. We noticed, however, that there were groups of very small prismatic crystalline forms, and though we could not determine the class of crystal by the nature of the liquid, yet they displayed the colloid character.

3. We observed the presence of little spores of different forms, and some light fragments of decomposed insects which could not have come from the flies which fell into the bottle; since these would have been decomposed and consumed by means of parasitical organisms, if account be taken of the

conditions favourable to a rapid and complete decomposition of their remains after so great a quantity of water had got in.

4. We saw that there were a number of little hairs perfect and with longitudinal channels, and exactly similar to a number of others which appeared still growing on the remains of skins of insects. These latter most probably must have been the remains of the worms and their chrysalises which lived on the putrefaction of the animal substances.

5. We observed on the sides of the phial a film of the appearance of blood, in which we saw entangled some threads of a textile fabric.

Cav. M. De Rossi considers that this analysis has set at rest the question as to the possibility of organic substances being preserved in the Catacombs. The perfect integrity of the glass and the solubility of the red liquid in water has supplied us with an unique example of liquid not mingled with any mineral substance. From the chemical analysis has been clearly manifested the presence of iron in conjunction with liquid matter positively and essentially animal, a result which excludes every other part of animal organisation and includes the one part alone, viz., blood. Then the microscopic analysis, having revealed the colloid nature of the liquid itself, and the presence of animal remains from the putrefaction, has confirmed the organic nature of the said liquid. Again, the microscope has revealed the presence of textile filaments, and these at once remind us of the linen cloths with which we know the early Christians used to collect the blood of the martyrs. Of course, a thousand accidents might have caused these threads to be mixed with the blood in this *ampulla*. Still, their presence here is what we should have expected from the Acts of the Martyrs.

Our readers will at once perceive that the result of this complete analysis not only proves the presence of blood in this particular phial, but confirms the testimony of Marangoni and Boldetti as to the contents of similar phials found by them.

Importance of this analysis, as confirming testimony of Marangoni and Boldetti.

If no other substance but blood will satisfy the searching analysis to which modern science has subjected the contents of this phial, we cannot be accused of rashness in regarding the opinion of Marangoni and Boldetti concerning the contents of vessels examined by them as correct, even though they did not subject them to a scientific analysis. Boldetti describes the various kinds of *ampullæ* found by him in the Catacombs, and carefully distinguishes between the reddish colour, which the glass contracts by oxidation, and the red film of dried-up blood which he observed on many of these phials.¹

Testimony of
F. Marchi.

We have given special prominence to the analysis of the contents of the bottle found in 1872, because it is of a kind that will satisfy our readers that the tests of modern science have been fairly applied to at least one of these *ampullæ*. But it is impossible to read Boldetti without feeling persuaded that he is thoroughly to be trusted, when describing what he himself has seen, however little dependence may be placed on his deductions from the facts of which he was the witness. The same may be said of the late Father Marchi, a much more scientific antiquarian than Boldetti. He describes the surroundings of an *ampulla* found by him which leave no doubt of the grave in which it was sticking being that of at least one martyr. He says:—

“In Cyriaca, this year [1844] in March, we found a large grave near the pavement with an *ampulla*, still red with blood, fastened in the middle of it. In it two bodies lay side by side, but between their feet I found the upper joint of the thigh of a third, and between the shin-bones of the two I found the thigh, and between their knees the knee, and between their thigh-bones and ribs the shins and feet of the third. I could have wished those had been present who think themselves wise in contradicting the best-established traditions. The Roman Church holds the *ampulla* of blood

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 185.

to be a sign of martyrdom, not by force of any law or written document preserved in her codices or annals, but by force of an ever-living custom. . . . In like manner, in Sant' Agnese, I opened a *bisomus* of martyrs, and I found behind the heads of the two an amputated arm, showing that, when they could not recover the whole body, they buried the mutilated limbs."¹

The celebrated Leibnitz describes the result of an examination made by him of a portion of one of these *ampullæ* in a letter to Fabretti: "I have examined the fragment of a glass phial, tinged with redness, brought me from the Cemetery of Callixtus, with the sole object of more readily ascertaining of what nature the redness is; and whether, in the language of modern physiologists, it is due to the animal or to the mineral kingdom. It occurred to me to try with a solution of sal-ammonia in common water whether anything could thus be separated from the glass, and taken off. This succeeded at once, and beyond all expectation. And hence the suspicion was justly excited in our minds that the matter was sanguineous, and not earthy or mineral; for the latter, by its corrosive power, would probably, in the course of so long a time, have gone down deeper into the glass, and would not so readily have yielded to the solution."² This examination falls far short of the analysis made in 1872, and scarcely merits the importance attached to it by Boldetti. It was easily set aside by the late learned Père de Buch, S.J., whose work, *De Phialis Rubricatis*, has excited a somewhat sharp controversy, and provoked an indignant but far from convincing reply from Mgr. Scognamiglio. If the distinguished Bollandist had lived to read Michele de Rossi's account of the recent discovery, we are inclined to think he would have modified his opinion, and have been ready to admit that a greater number of these phials are really reddened with the blood of martyrs.

We have no intention of entering into the details of the

¹ Monumenti delle Arti, p. 118.

² Apud Fabrett. Inscr., c. 8.

Decree of S.
Cong. of
Relics.

controversy about these red-stained phials. Dr. Kraus, in the second edition of his German version of our work, has given a short history of the dispute, and has formulated his own conclusions. We prefer to imitate the reticence of the brothers De Rossi, and confine ourselves to the narration of ascertained facts. The Sacred Congregation of Holy Relics and Indulgences in a decree of April 10th 1668, declared: "Cum de notis disceptaretur, ex quibus veræ Sanctorum Martyrum reliquiæ a falsis et dubiis dignosci possint; eadem S. C., re diligentius examinâtâ, censuit palmam et vas illorum sanguine tinctum pro signis certissimis habenda esse; aliorum vero signorum examen in aliud tempus rejecit—Whereas it was disputed about the marks by which true relics of the holy Martyrs may be distinguished from false and doubtful ones, the said Sacred Congregation has decided that a palm-branch and a vessel stained with their blood are to be held for most certain signs; but the examination of other signs it has deferred to another time." This decree has been re-published by the Sacred Congregation in 1863; and we have shown in the beginning of this chapter that the vessel of blood was, even as early as the fourth century, regarded as the most undeniable sign of a martyr's tomb.

Examples of
vessels stained
red but not
with blood.
A.S., iii. 712.

It does not, however, follow that every vessel with red stains upon it is at once to be pronounced as reddened with blood. In the year 1872, a chemical analysis was made at the Greenwich Observatory of sixty fragments of ancient glass vessels with a reddish deposit upon them, and it was found that the red colour was in the substance of the glass and not on its surface, and was due to the oxide of iron resulting from the decomposition of the glass itself. And no doubt the redness on many other such vessels is due to the same cause. Still, the case described by Leibnitz proves that it would be rash to generalise too widely from the Greenwich experiments, especially as it is by no means clear that the sixty fragments there tested came from the Catacombs. The examination by

The Phials found in the Catacombs. 341

M. Paul Desaint, professor of the Sorbonne, of a glass vessel from the Catacombs attests the presence of organic matter.¹ The analysis made by the learned chemist Signor G. Bertassi of Milan of the *ampullæ* found in the tomb of SS. Gervasius and Protasius attests the same.

It was suggested by Père de Buch that the red substance found in these vessels was the remains of wine from the agapæ; or, possibly, Eucharistic wine corrupted and dried up. This hypothesis has recently received a certain additional appearance of probability from the analysis of the contents of an *ampulla* found in the Aliscamps at Arles in 1877, described by M. Berthelot in the *Revue Archéologique* for June in the same year. The chemical analysis proved the existence of alcohol, bi-tartrate of potash, acetic acid, tartrate of lime, and traces of acetic ether. The liquid was evidently wine, and, indeed, preserved still the smell of wine. The glass was much oxidised, but was hermetically sealed; and the liquid had a yellowish colour. The glass was of the Gallo-Roman period.

P. de Buch's theory of wine untenable.

R.S., iii. 718.

A comparison of this account with the analysis of the contents of the phial found in St. Saturninus only shows the entire dissimilarity of the substances. One manifests all the characteristics of wine, and the other all those of blood. The history of the Church in Gaul proves that, among other abuses condemned by local councils, was that of burying the Holy Eucharist with the dead. Towards the end of the sixth century, the Council of Auxerre forbade this practice,² but this was long after burial had ceased in the Catacombs, as De Rossi pertinently remarks. No instance has come down to us of the Blood of our Lord being deposited in the grave, while we know from the writings of Tertullian and Origen that the most extreme care was taken in the early ages that no drop should fall from the chalice.³ It is, therefore, impos-

R.S., iii. 500.

¹ De l'Épinois, *Les Catacombes de Rome*, p. 202.

² Conc. Antissiod., can. 12.

³ "Calicis aut panis etiam nostri aliquid decuti in terram anxie patimur."
—Tert. De Corona., c. 3; cf. Origen, Hom. xiii. in Exod.

sible to admit the supposition that these vessels, stuck in the plaster outside the graves, and exposed to all the accidents to which such a position rendered them liable, could have contained Eucharistic wine.

Theory of
agapæ wine
equally unten-
able.

No less untenable is the supposition that these *ampullæ* may have contained the remains of wine used at the agapæ. The fact is, there is no proof of the agapæ ever having been held underground. The buildings over the cemeteries, as we have shown, were the recognised places for these feasts; and the abuses which caused these feasts, and those afterwards celebrated at the *natalitia* of the Saints, to be abolished would equally have discredited the practice of preserving the wine at the martyrs' tombs, if such a practice had ever existed.

Some phials
contained
balsam.

It is, however, quite in keeping with the customs of the ancient Christians to suppose that some of these phials contained odoriferous oils and balsams, which were extensively used for honouring the faithful departed, sometimes by being placed in the tombs, and sometimes by being burned in lamps in front of the shrines. We have seen how carefully drops of these *olea* were carried away and preserved by the faithful as relics. But these phials are not to be confounded with those stained with blood.

Conclusion.

The general conclusion to be deduced from what has been set forth seems to be, that, although many difficulties remain to be cleared up by future discoveries, and more accurate scientific examination of the *ampullæ* that may be found in the Catacombs, yet no sufficient evidence has, as yet, been adduced to invalidate the principles upon which the Roman authorities have distinguished the tombs of martyrs from those of ordinary Christians. The *à priori* objections of Péré de Buch, grounded on the opinion of a Belgian chemist as to the impossibility of the preservation of organic remains under such circumstances, have been overthrown by the analysis to which we have given marked prominence. And although the piety of the faithful may be prone to believe a grave to be that of

a martyr on insufficient grounds, yet the most vigilant care is taken by the authorities to prevent such mistakes, and they do not hesitate to make use of all the light that modern archæology can throw upon the subject to aid them in their decisions.

APPENDIX.

Note A (page 4).

BLASPHEMOUS CARICATURE OF THE CRUCIFIXION.

IN the years 1846-1857 extensive excavations were made on the Palatine Hill at the expense of Nicholas, Emperor of Russia. Discovery of the caricature.
Late in the autumn of 1856, four small square rooms were laid bare among the ruins of a very ancient building near a semi-circular *exedra* belonging to the palace of the Cæsars on the south-western slope of the hill, not far from the Church of St. Anastasia.

On the walls of these chambers were a number of *graffiti*, and amongst them the rude drawing, of which we give a copy in the following page. The portion of the plaster on which this had been drawn, was carefully detached from the wall and removed to the Museum of the Roman College under the superintendence of Padre Garrucci, S.J., who had been the first to discover it. He also Its interpretation. wrote an article on the subject in the *Civiltà Cattolica* of 1857, in which he published a copy of the *graffito* and argued that it was meant to be a mock representation of our Blessed Lord, to whom some Christian was offering adoration, and that the inscription should be read ΑΑΕΞΑΜΕΝΟC CEBETE (for αεβεται) ΘΕΟΝ. "Alex-amenus worships (his) God." He attributed the caricature to an early period of the third century, because that is precisely the time during which we have evidence that an insolent calumny was current among the heathen in Rome and in Africa, which might have given occasion to it. The very title of the sixteenth chapter of Tertullian's apology stands in some MSS. in these words: 'That Christians do not adore the head of an ass, as they cast in their teeth, but the true God and the sign of the Cross.' And the opening of the chapter runs as follows: "You dream that the head of an ass is our God. The origin of this idea must be credited to Cornelius Tacitus, who, writing in the fifth Book of his Histories an account of the war against the Jews, took occasion to propound

his own theories as to the name and the religion of that people. He represents them as having been delivered—or rather, according to him, banished—out of Egypt, and distressed for want of water in the deserts of Arabia, when some wild asses happened to pass by, on their way to drink (as they supposed) after feeding.

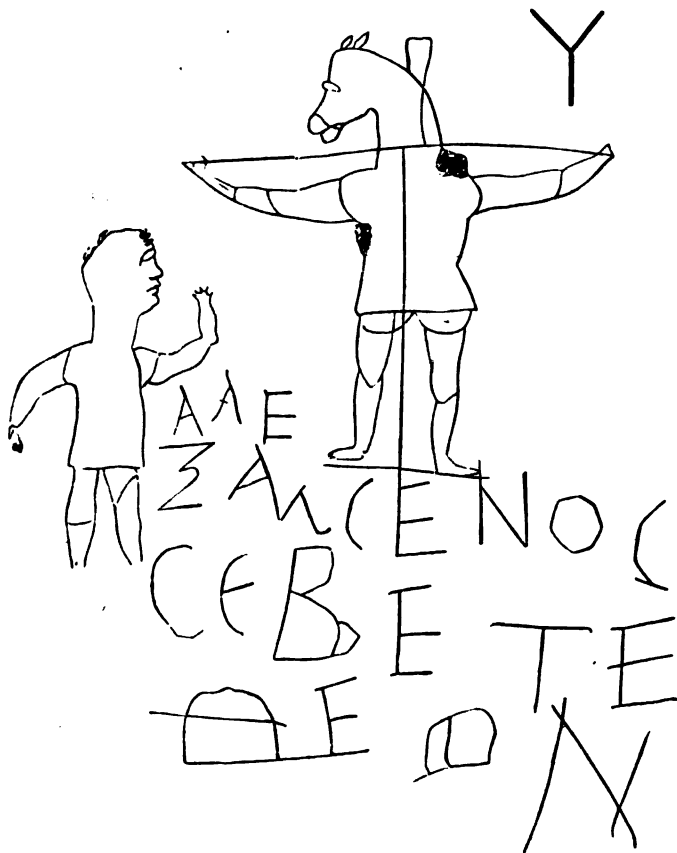


FIG. 126.—Caricature of the Crucifixion, found on the Walls of a Chamber in the Palace of the Caesars.

Under their guidance they found a fountain ; and in gratitude for so signal a benefit, ever afterwards counted sacred the likeness of that animal. And so I suppose, because we are near akin to the Jewish religion, they have borrowed the idea from this source, and credit us also with the same sacred rites."

Towards the end of the same chapter, he mentions another form in which this calumny was being circulated, and distinctly speaks of it as quite a recent thing. He says a painting had lately appeared in the city, consisting of a figure with the ears of an ass, and a hoof on one foot, dressed in a toga and carrying a book, with an inscription saying, "The God of the Christians ONOKOIHTHC." Another form of the same calumny

We do not venture to translate this word, because there are many different readings of it, suggesting or requiring different interpretations. According to the reading adopted by Liddell and Scott in their Lexicon, it means "lying in an ass's stall;" according to others, it means "begotten by an ass," or "having the hoofs of an ass," or "the head of an ass," or "the head and ears of an ass." Finally, Ochler, the learned editor of Tertullian, is very confident that the true reading is ONOKOIHTHC, and that the last part of the word is the verb *κοιᾶται*, which Hesychius interprets by *λεπᾶται*, and from which Vossius derives the Latin *incohare*, in the sense of "to initiate any sacred rite." Hence he translates it as *Asinarius Sacerdos*, "a donkey priest."

We shall not pretend to make a selection for our readers between these various versions and interpretations; but we are sure they will thank us for setting before them the following copy of an antique gem, of whose history we are told nothing (according to the usual practice of antiquarians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), but which was published by its owner more than two hundred years ago,¹ and by him strangely misapplied to Apuleius and his Golden Ass. It can hardly be anything else than a copy of the very painting described by Tertullian, with which it is in almost literal agreement.²

Garrucci cites passages from Plutarch and other heathen writers, who agree with Tacitus in attributing to the Jews the idolatrous worship of an ass's head; and one from Minucius Felix, showing that the same calumny was repeated against the Christians. "I hear," says the heathen disputant in that author's apologetic dialogue,³ "I hear that for some foolish reason or other,



exhibited in an ancient gem.

FIG. 127. — An ancient gem, representing a donkey teaching; probably meant to ridicule Christianity.

¹ *Gemmæ antiquitæ sculptæ a P. Stephanonio Vicentino collectæ et declarationibus illustratæ.* Venet. 1646, tab. 30.

² Luke Holstein and others have long since pointed this out, correcting Stefanoni's mistake.

³ Octavius, c. 9.

I know not what, you have a most disgraceful form of worship, worshipping the head of an ass."

The caricature proves the ancient use of the crucifix,

Finally, he points out the great importance of this *graffito* as the oldest representation of the Crucifixion now extant; and therefore giving valuable evidence as to the true shape of the Cross, and as to the private use by the faithful, even in those early times, of the figure of a crucifix. Certainly, it is difficult to guess what should have suggested such a representation as this, in mockery, unless it had been known that Christians were in the habit of thus honouring the crucifix in reality. The mere knowledge that the Christians worshipped a crucified Lord would not have sufficed; for persons who suffered death by crucifixion suffered naked, whereas this figure is clothed. And although it is not necessary to suppose that the author of the caricature knew the precise form of the cross on which our Lord suffered in Jerusalem, yet his representation, if it was not a copy in this particular from some original, must be taken as evidence of the ordinary shape of the cross when used as an instrument for the execution of malefactors in Rome. But these are matters into which we have no intention of entering here. The main point which Garrucci sought to establish was that the whole scene was meant to be a caricature of Christian worship, the figure being a blasphemous caricature of our Lord, and the man being engaged in the act of adoration described by Job as "kissing his hand with his mouth."¹

and the Roman manner of crucifixion.

Another interpretation of the caricature

This explanation was received with great unanimity by the leading masters in antiquarian science, and illustrated with great learning by many of them, both in France, Italy, and Germany. In the last-named country a new explanation was first hazarded by Herr Haupt, Writer in the Imperial Court Library at Vienna, who attacked all the Christian archæologists of the day in terms of great arrogance, and maintained that the figure was no caricature at all, but intended in all seriousness as the representation of a man worshipping the heathen god Typhon. He read the inscription thus, ΑΛΕΞΑΜΕΝΟC CEBE TE (for *αεβει σε*) ΘΕΟΝ, "Alexamenus worships thee as God," and considered that the Y which appears on the right of the crucified figure was meant for the second letter of the name of Typhon.

This extravagant proposition has since been used in support of the system which sees in the Christian symbols of the monogram and the Cross mere imitations of heathen forms, and in fact would fain obliterate all distinction between Christianity and Heathenism, seeking to make the former appear as a natural product of the latter. This is far too large and serious a question to be handled

¹ Job xxxi. 27.

in these pages. Neither is it at all necessary. For Herr Haupt's theory may be at once rejected as inadmissible for many other reasons. First, few persons, unless driven to it in order to maintain an hypothesis, will count it probable that any worshipper of any Deity would ever seriously represent himself in so ridiculous a form as this *graffito* sets before us. Secondly, there is no proof that the worship of Typhon existed in Rome at all; certainly none, that the idol received any real veneration; and the utmost that can be contended for is, that some sought to propitiate him as a malignant being. Thirdly, the Christian interpretation does much less violence to the actual form of the words than Herr Haupt's. It would be hard to justify his rendering of *re* for *œ*, whereas students of Greek epigraphy are familiar with the substitution of *ε* for *αι* even as early as the days of Augustus. And it is much more likely that the Y is an unfinished scrawl by another hand, or even intended as another figure of the Cross, than that it should have been meant as an abbreviation of the word Typhon. *Bullettino*, 1863, 35.

Moreover, the nature of the locality and the character of the surrounding *graffiti* make it in the highest degree improbable that any serious representation would have been scribbled here. The room was certainly either a guard-room of soldiers, or a schoolroom for boys. Near the mock crucifix is another *graffito*, of a mill being turned by an ass, with the inscription, *Labora Aselle quomodo ego laboravi et proderit tibi*. "Work, little donkey, as hard as I have worked, and it will be for your good." It has been thought that this had reference to soldiers relieving guard; but it is quite as appropriate in the mouth of a boy leaving school. Then the names of Mars, Fortuna, and Æsculapius, which occur on the walls, have been urged in favour of the military use of the room; but these too might very well have been invoked by schoolboys; and such inscriptions as the following, which are of frequent recurrence there, seem to us conclusive evidence in favour of the other theory. Of course it is quite possible that the room might have served both purposes at various times.

VERNA EXIT DE PE . . . OGIO APOLLONIVS
EVTYXES EXIT DE PAEDAGOGIO
CORINTHVS EXIT DE PEDAGOGIO
MARIANVS AFER EXIT DE PEDAGOGIV.

Bullettino,
1867, 75.

"Apollonius, Eutyches, Corinthus, Marianus, are leaving school."

Another name scribbled on the same wall is LIBANUS, after which is added by another hand EPISCOPUS, and lower down on the same wall, and apparently by the same hand, LIBANUS EPI.

Other ironical allusions to Christianity in the same place.

Bullettino,
1863, 72.

De Rossi is disposed to read in these scribblings further indications of the same spirit of scoffing against the professors of the Christian religion, as dictated the caricature of the crucifix. He supposes some pagan schoolboy to attach the nickname of Bishop to one of his schoolfellows who may have filled the office of prefect, or been otherwise set in authority over him.

Early in the year 1870, a discovery was made by L. C. Visconti in another neighbouring room on the Palatine, of a *graffito* consisting of the words AAEZAMENOC FIDELIS; and it is obvious to conjecture that this was written by the very same Alexamenus whose religious exercises had been scoffed at by his companions in the first inscription, and who here makes a profession of his faith in the second. The title *fidelis* would probably not have been known or understood by any but the Christians themselves.¹

As to the date of these *graffiti*, or rather of the caricature in particular, different periods have been assigned by different authors, from an early part of the second century to the middle of the third. All seem to be agreed that it cannot be put later than this. De Rossi sets it down as belonging to the time of Septimius Severus, A.D. 197-215, or not long afterwards.

Probable origin of the calumny which suggested the caricature.

A more interesting and important, and at the same time far more difficult question concerns the origin and history of the monstrous and insulting calumny which suggested it. One German author considers that it is due to the circumstances of our Lord's birth, and to representations of Him which had been seen, laid in a manger with an ox and an ass by His side. But we confess this seems to us wholly insufficient to account for it; more especially as the reproach was inherited by the Christians (as we have seen) from the Jews, with whom the heathen for sometime persisted in identifying them. Oriental scholars are inclined to trace it to a blunder of the Egyptians, confounding the Jews with the Semites, amongst whom the worship of the ass really prevailed, or to a resemblance between one of the Jewish names for God and the Egyptian word for an ass.

Worship of an ass by some Pagans

Dr. Kraus however has pointed out that there were certainly some heretical sects in the early ages of the Church, in whose monstrous mixture of Christian dogma with heathenish superstitions some veneration of an ass seems to have found a place. The ass entered into the heathen mysteries of Bacchus, the festivals of Vesta, and some versions of the war of the Titans against the gods. It was even said that Bacchus had caused the ass on which he was carried, to speak with a human voice; which reminds us of course of the ass that spoke to Balaam. Then

¹ See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, pp. 109, 125.

again, though it is impossible to trace the precise genealogy of many of the early heresies, and it would often be mere waste of time to attempt it, yet we cannot altogether lose sight of our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem just before His Passion, riding upon an ass, nor forget that this had been made the subject of an express prophecy concerning Him, "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold thy King cometh to thee, meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of her that is used to the yoke."¹ We need not enter into the details of the mystical explanation of this action that was given by the early Fathers. It will be enough to mention that they recognised in "her that had been used to the yoke" the people of Israel, the children of the Old Covenant, and in "the colt on which no man hath ever sitten," the Gentile world. The two together therefore were a type of the whole Church. Is this the key which will unlock the secret of the following, which we find as the reverse of a medal of Alexander the Great? We know from

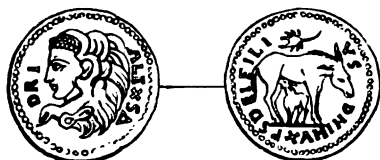


FIG. 128.—Medal of Alexander the Great, with its Reverse, showing an Ass and its Foal, with a Christian Inscription.

St. Chrysostom² that there were Christians in his day who wore brass coins or medals of Alexander of Macedon on their heads or attached to their feet, and valued them highly as charms; and there is evidence that traces of this superstition still remained in Smyrna even as late as the beginning of the last century. And here we have a medal with the head of Alexander, clad apparently in a lion's skin,³ on one side, and an ass with her foal on the other side, with the amazing inscription DN IHV XPS DEI FILIUS. "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God."

¹ Matt. xxi. 5. Zach. ix. 9.

² Ad illum. Catech., Homil. ii. in fin.

³ The most common type of the coins of Alexander was the head of Hercules with the lion's skin. It has been suggested by a learned friend whether this coin or medal may not have been produced under Christian auspices some time between 231 and 235, when the style on the coins of the Emperor Alexander Severus was IMP ALEXANDER PIUS AUG. In 221 he had taken the names of M. Aur. Alexander, and in 222, M. Aur. Severus Alexander. But when he had dropped all these names excepting that of Alexander, is it not possible that some members of the Christian Church, which had looked to him with so much hope, may have ventured

Dr. Kraus quotes a law of Honorius, A.D. 409. which condemns a sect of *calicola*, whose superstition is said to be unheard of, but is not any further described. In its first and most obvious meaning, we should understand by *calicola* worshippers of the heavenly host, sun, moon, and stars; but this superstition could hardly be called new and strange: it was probably one of the oldest of all. Dr. Kraus therefore suggests another reading *cillicola*, from *κίλλος*, an ass; and he produces a coin of Honorius, having on its reverse an ass and her foal, with the legend *Asina*. We learn from Epiphanius¹ that it was pretended by the Gnostics that the Jews worshipped a God Sabaot, who was "a man standing, but having the form of an ass."

Notices of
Christianity
in Pompeii.
Bullettino,
1864. 72.

Finally, Dr. Kraus produces the ancient gem which we have already seen of two men listening respectfully to an ass who is clothed in a *pallium* or philosopher's cloak, with its right foot uplifted as though in the act of teaching, and he sets side by side with it the *graffito* found on the walls of a chamber in Pompeii, in which there is every reason to believe that Christians used to hold their assemblies. On the outside of the house is a warning to idle loiterers not to tarry there, for that this is no place for them (*Otiosus locus hic non est; discede morator*). And among the scribblings on the inner walls are, on the one hand, an exhortation to listen to the Christians (*Audi Christianos*), and, on the other, a contemptuous declaration that here "a mule teaches little flies." Of course it is possible that this may have some obscene or opprobrious signification which cannot now be ascertained; but, considered with reference to the place where it is found, it sounds like a coarse rendering of the same charge which the Apostle himself brought against certain teachers, that they "creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, who are led away with divers desires."²

For further particulars on this curious subject we must refer our readers to P. Garrucci's dissertation, *Il Crocifisso graffiato in casa dei Cesari*, 1857, and Dr. Kraus' *Das Spottcrucifix vom Palatin und ein neuentdecktes graffito*, 1872, from which most of this article has been taken.

to compliment him by representing him in the character of Alexander the Great, and then exhibited on the reverse of the medal the humility of the King of kings? Had it not been for the passage we have quoted from St. Chrysostom, we should have been tempted to adopt some such explanation as this.

¹ C. Gnost. Hæres. xxvi.

² 2 Tim. iii. 6.

Note B (page 23).

A MITHRAIC BURIAL-PLACE CONNECTED WITH THE CATACOMB
OF PRÆTEXTATUS.

Our readers must not allow themselves to be misled by the title of our note. It is only meant as a description of the place where the tombs and paintings of which we are going to speak may be seen. We do not suppose that any connection between the two burial-places was originally contemplated. Quite the reverse. But until De Rossi's promised maps and plans of the locality are published, we cannot venture to say how the connection was brought about. Judging from the much lower level of that part of the excavation in which the Mithraic paintings occur, and from the holes which may still be seen in the walls of the Christian gallery, and which were probably made to secure some efficient separation between the Catacomb and its unwelcome neighbour, we should be disposed to suspect that the Christian fossors unwittingly broke in upon the Pagan burial-place, after it had been abandoned by its original makers, and its precise site forgotten. Father Marchi considered that he had found other examples of accidents of this kind¹ in the Catacombs; and it was one that was specially likely to happen in the case of a sect like that of Mithras, which was finally suppressed and extinguished in Rome by the Prefect Gracchus, A.D. 376. If the galleries of the Catacombs which are in connection with this Pagan sepulchre belong to the latest period of their use as places of burial, this explanation would receive very strong confirmation. However, for the decision of this point, we must await, as we have said, a future publication of De Rossi's. In our present note we only propose to give some account of the paintings themselves which we have often seen, and of which M. Perret and Father Garrucci have published copies. The latter has also illustrated them by a very learned commentary, from which most of the following remarks are taken.²

It has been mentioned in the text that Bottari was the first to publish them,³ or rather to publish a very faulty and garbled copy of parts of them, and that he sought to give them a Christian interpretation. This formed one of the special supports of Raoul-Rochette's theory as to the character of primitive Christian art,

Position of
this burial
place.
R.S., i. 92.

¹ Monum. dei Crist. Primitivi, p. 66.

² Tre Sepolcri con Pitture ed Iscrizioni appartenenti alle superstizioni Paganе del Bacco Sabazio, e del Persidico Mitra. Napoli. 1852.

³ Sculture e Pitture Sacre, &c. Tom. iii. pp. 1, 188, 192, &c.
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according to which the most disgraceful Pagan superstitions were sometimes used as Christian symbols. But with our present more intimate knowledge of the artistic monuments of the Catacombs, no one will be tempted to believe that the paintings we are about to describe are Christian.

Description of the paintings. They form the ornamentation of an *arcosolium*, and together represent a continuous history; the history of a departed soul, as understood by those who caused them to be painted on this tomb. The first act of the drama, which occupies the lowest part of the vault on the right-hand side of the spectator, sets before us the departure of the deceased, a lady of the name of Vibia. She is borne away horizontally, robed, and with hair and arms hanging straight down to the ground, in the arms of a powerful man, or god, Pluto, who stands, crowned with laurel, in a chariot drawn by four horses. The horses are galloping at full speed, and Mercury, armed with his usual wand in one hand and holding with the other the rein at the mouth of one of the horses, is hurrying forward towards a large opening in the earth. The legend over their heads is *ABREPTIO VIBIES ET DISCENSIO*, "The carrying off of Vibia and her going down" (to Tartarus).

Then, in the centre of the vault, is a larger scene, occupied by a high tribunal on which are seated *DIS PATER* and *ABRACURA*, whilst on the ground on the left-hand side stand three figures, one male and two female, all dressed alike, with heads covered and downcast eyes, and who (we learn from the superinscription) are the Divine Fates (*FATA DIVINA*); and on the right-hand side Mercury (*MERCURIUS NUNTIUS*) introduces two females, resembling in dress and attitude the Divine Fates, but called respectively *VIBIA* and *ALCESTIS*. *Alcestis* was the very type of conjugal affection and fidelity. *Dispater* is of course only another name for Pluto, and *Abracura* must be the Mithraic substitute for *Proserpine*. Some have sought for the origin of this name in the Greek words which might signify "Delicate Maiden;" but considering the whole surroundings of the scene, we cannot doubt that it is only a feminine form of the same mystical name (formed out of the number 365) which we are familiar with in *Abracax*, or *Abrasax*, *Abraxas*, *Abracadabara*, &c.¹

At the other extremity of the vault, *i.e.*, on the right-hand side, as a pendant to the *Abreptio Vibies*, is the representation of seven men seated at a *sigma* table, partaking of a repast. Eight loaves or rolls of bread lie on the table, and four dishes containing

¹ We cannot go into details on this subject, but must refer our readers to *Irenæus*, lib. i. c. xxiv. 6; *Epiphanius*, lib. i. *Hær.* iv. 16; *St. Jerome*, lib. i. adv. *Jovinianum*, et in c. 3 *Amos*. *Arnobius* adv. *Gentes*, lib. i.

respectively a fish, a fowl of some kind, some small animal (probably a hare), and pastry. Three of these men wear Phrygian caps, and over the head of one of these is written VINCENTIUS, whilst the legend that embraces them all, tells us they are seven pious priests, SEPTE PII SACERDOTES.

The flat surface at the back of the arch immediately over the grave is occupied by another feast, or rather by two scenes, of which a feast is the principal. In the right-hand corner is a subordinate or introductory scene, consisting of an arched doorway, under which stands Vibia, being led forward by a man who holds in his left hand a crown, whilst with his right he introduces the lady. This scene tells its own tale plainly enough; nevertheless the artist has added the words INDUCTIO VIBIES, or "Leading in of Vibia," upon the doorway, and ANGELUS BONUS over the head of the young man. Then at the feast Vibia herself is seated with the crown on her head, in the company of five other guests, men and women, most of whom are crowned, and all are said to have been approved of by the judgment of the good (BONORUM JUDICIO JUDICATI). A fish and a cake are already placed in dishes on the table; and one of three servants is bringing in a third dish containing a fowl, whilst two other servants are stooping or kneeling on the flower-covered meadow in the foreground, and an *amphora* (of wine) stands on a low triangular frame in the right-hand corner.

On the outer surface of the wall, the whole *arcosolium* is flanked by two tall upright plants, or rather a pattern of scroll-work made more or less in imitation of a plant, round the stem of which another plant is twined. And finally, on the same outer surface, but above the arch, we read a long Latin inscription, part of which has perished by the falling off of the plaster, and which is damaged in two other places by the holes already spoken of. Most of it, however, remains quite legible, and we learn from it that this is the place of burial of Vincentius, a priest of the god Sabazius, "who served God with a pious mind." It contains also an exhortation to the reader to eat and drink and enjoy sensual delights during life, for that this is all which a man will carry away with him out of this world, whither many have preceded him, and all will sooner or later follow.

VINCENTI HOC	QUETES QUOT VIDES PLURES ME ANTECES-
SERUNT OMNES EXPECTO	
MANDUCA VIBE LUDE BENI AT ME CUM VIBES BENEFAC HOC	
TECYM FERES	
NUMINIS ANTISTES SABAZIS VINCENTIUS H	(Q)UI SACRA
SANCTA	
DEUM MENTE PIA	CO(LUIT).

It is conjectured that Vincentius was the husband of Vibia, and this gives the most satisfactory explanation of the whole series of paintings which have been described. The reader will have observed that Vincentius distinctly calls himself "a priest of the god Sabazius," who is mentioned also by Origen.¹

Other similar paintings in the neighbourhood.

In two neighbouring tombs we have paintings less intelligible and an inscription less perfectly preserved, but they manifestly belong to some kindred superstition and are of the same sensual character. In these paintings a soldier appears three or four times; sometimes fully armed, sometimes less so, but always wearing his helmet. Once he is in company with a priest who holds aloft in his hands a dead lamb, as though offering it in sacrifice to five stars which appear just above. Once also he is kneeling on one knee behind a woman in the same attitude; but from the kind of crown which appears on her head we may suspect that she was a priestess; and probably the whole series has reference to certain scenes of initiation into the mysteries of Mithras, in which we know, both from Tertullian and St. Jerome,² that a soldier bore some part.

The central figure in one of these *arcosolia* is a naked Venus, turning her back on the spectators. She stands within a circle, outside which, in the corners of the square which encloses it, are the head of Oceanus, a parrot, a serpent, a peacock pecking at a vase of fruit and flowers, a dolphin, and a phoenix with its egg or ball of myrrh.

The inscription shows that one of these *arcosolia* was the tomb of one Marcus Aurelius. . . . S.D.S.I.M., i.e., *Sacerdos Dei Solis Invicti Mithræ*, "Priest of the Sun, the invincible god Mithras;" a place which he had prepared for himself and his children; and it openly proclaims in his praise that he had provided all sorts of sensual enjoyments for his *alumni*, which in this connection has probably a semi-religious sense and expresses discipleship rather than its ordinary social signification. The words are QUI BASIA (v) OLUPATEM JOCUM ALUMNIS SUIS DEDIT.

Note C (page 240).

THE GOOD SHEPHERD, CHRISTIAN AND PAGAN.

It may have occurred to some of our readers that the remarks which we made, in the second chapter of Book I. about the Good

¹ C. Celsum, lib. i. c. 9.

² Tertul. de Coronâ. St. Jerome Ep. ad Lætiam, tom. i. p. 672, ed. Vallarsi.

Shepherd, are inconsistent with the examples which we have given, in Book IV., of sarcophagi with this figure upon them, and which we stated were probably sculptured in Pagan shops. Those who have read Mr. Parker's book on "Tombs in and near Rome" cannot fail to have been struck by the beautiful copy which he gives (Plate XIX.) of a fresco in the tomb of Statilius Taurus (B.C. 30), representing a shepherd with three sheep around him. Both the animals and the human figure are drawn with perfect artistic taste, and there is nothing in the simple and graceful dress of the shepherd to suggest the remarks of De Rossi about the nakedness and want of gravity of Pagan representations of the Kriophorus. But then it is to be observed that this is a purely pastoral scene, and the remarks of De Rossi were confined to those frescoes where the shepherd is represented with the sheep on his shoulders, or where he is the principal figure in the composition. Here the shepherd is only one of a group in a series of subjects containing about ninety figures.

It may, however, be urged that none of the Good Shepherds sculptured on the sarcophagi answer to the description of De Rossi, or resemble the Kriophorus on page 28. They are all of a grave character and decently clothed, and yet we have admitted that many of them were executed by Pagan sculptors. (See Figures 91, 93, and 94.) To this we reply that although the figure of the Good Shepherd was not unknown to Pagan art, yet it was by no means a favourite subject. De Rossi does not hesitate to say : *R.S.*, ii. 351. "It is clear that the predilection of Christians for the image of the Shepherd was the cause of the multiplication of its sculptured repetition on sepulchral coffins. Hence we see the fashion of these scenes to have prevailed on sarcophagi of every kind in the third century, when the Good Shepherd had been for some time the favourite figure on Christian monuments ; and the greater number of such sarcophagi adorned with these scenes we find precisely in Christian cemeteries. I do not even know one example of the sculpture of the *Pastor Kriophorus* in a Pagan sepulchre, although I have no difficulty in believing that one has been or might be found. In 1846 a *Columbarium* was excavated between the Via Appia and Via Latina, near the Porta Appia, in the pavement of which there was represented in mosaic the Rape of Proserpine. I saw there in its place a sarcophagus of bad workmanship, and on one end of it was sculptured the shepherd, with the pipe in his hand, between three sheep. But on searching among the ashes of the burned bodies in the *olla*, some small plates of lead were found with Basilidian inscriptions ; a certain indication of the Gnostic sect, to whom this sepulchre belonged." It is easy to understand

how the makers of sarcophagi, finding a particular type of pastoral scene much sought after, would reproduce that type in such a manner as to be pleasing to their customers, without being aware of the meaning which the latter attached to it.

Among the sarcophagi photographed by Simelli, and reproduced by Mr. Parker (Plate XVII. n. 2), is one representing a vine, from which a number of *putti* are gathering grapes, and treading them out in the press below, others are tending and milking sheep. But in the centre and at each end of the sarcophagus is a large figure of the Good Shepherd standing on a pedestal, with a sheep on his shoulders, and a pastoral crook in his hand. There is nothing to show that this sarcophagus could not have been sculptured by a Pagan artist, and yet the meaning of the whole to a Christian is unmistakable, and it may be taken as an example of the modifications which Christian ideas produced on the original type of the Kriophorus.

Note D (page 118).

ANECDOTE ILLUSTRATING DE ROSSI'S INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE
OF THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE CATACOMBS.

It may be worth while to preserve the anecdote, as it was told, not very long after the event, by one who had it from an eye-witness.

"I forget the precise date of the re-discovery of the Catacomb of Prætextatus, or at least of the staircase which leads down to it, on the left-hand side of the Via Appia, nearly opposite the famous Catacomb of San Callisto. A gallery had been found leading out of the staircase about half-way down, and the openings of a few other galleries at the foot of the staircase had been cleared of their rubbish ; but as yet no inscriptions of any value had been recovered ; none with a consular date, whereby to fix the chronology. De Rossi had formed his own conjectures, or rather, I should say, had come to a very positive conclusion on this subject ; but it was founded on analogy, and on a hundred signs and tokens which he had noticed, but which would have escaped any ordinary observer, and would not have been appreciated by him, even if he had seen them. One evening the corporal of the excavators, returning from his day's labour, and reporting progress to his master, said they

had found an epitaph to-day, and it had the name of a Consul on it, but only one ; and that one was—Aurelius, let us say, or any other name that is of frequent occurrence in the Consular Fasti—for I have forgotten the real name, and our corporal too had forgotten the *prænomen* ; whether it was Titus, or Marcus, or Lucius, or what other he couldn't say. "Where did you find it?" "At the bottom of the staircase." "Very well ; I'll come out and see it to-morrow, and don't you touch it till I come." The corporal being dismissed, our antiquarian betook himself to his books and papers ; and at the end of half an hour or more announced to a friend sitting in his room, "That consul must be such a one, and the inscription belongs to the year — ; but it can't have been found at the bottom of the staircase. It must have come from that gallery which opens out of the staircase, on the right hand you go down." The friend remonstrated at what seemed the absolute wildness of such conjectures ; to trust his own deductions from books without having seen the stone, and, in one particular at least, *against* the testimony of those who had seen it ! How could he possibly select the one Aurelius that was meant out of the five and twenty that *might* have been meant ? and then his verdict as to its position, it was monstrous ! much learning had made him mad. "Come and see," was the only rejoinder ; and the invitation was gladly accepted. Early the following morning, the two friends stood at the bottom of the long steep staircase which dives into the Catacomb of Prætextatus, and there at their feet lay the stone with the precious inscription. "Read it for yourself," said the antiquarian, not condescending to stoop and see the verification of his own announcement. "The *prænomen* is Titus, isn't it?" "Well it is certainly ; there's no denying it. But, anyhow, you're wrong as to its position ; here it lies, just where we were told." "Stop a minute as to that. Corporal, where was that stone found?" "There, Signore, just where you are standing." "Did you find it yourself?" "No, Signore." "Who did then?" "Pasquale." "Pasquale, where did you find that stone?" "Please, Signore, I dug it out of that gallery up there to the left, as you go up the stairs ; but I and Valentino brought it down here out of the way, because we were afraid we should break it with our pickaxes." The look of triumph in the antiquarian may be easily imagined ; and in due course of time he vouchsafed to explain the process of reasoning by which he had been led to his conclusion."¹

¹ The Rambler, July 1860, pp. 219, 220.

*Note E (page 228).***TREATMENT OF PAGAN ART UNDER THE CHRISTIAN EMPERORS.**

The subject of this new work of M. Allard's is too intimately connected with that of the present volume not to call for some special mention. It has only appeared whilst these pages were passing through the press ; otherwise we should have been glad to avail ourselves of some of the facts which it contains. The work is strictly historical, and contains a faithful enumeration of all the laws which were passed by the Christian emperors concerning the heathen temples and statues, and also of all the facts which concern them, that are recorded by ecclesiastical historians or in the *Lives of the Saints*. These do not always strictly correspond with the laws, and the causes of the discrepancy are carefully examined in each instance. The general character of the conclusion to which M. Allard's historical inquiries have led him may be sufficiently gathered from the opening remarks of his preface. "There are two ways," he says, "of understanding progress. To some persons it is a violent power which crushes every obstacle, at the risk of confounding in one and the same ruin abuses which it is necessary to destroy, and institutions which it would have been sufficient to reform. To others, it is a power of sweetness and patience, which avoids making unnecessary havoc, which transforms without destroying, or at least abstains from destroying anything which is capable of being transformed. Progress of this kind leaves behind it only the recollection of a benefit received and the trace of many blessings. Christian progress founded upon the Gospel is of this latter kind ; it wears the character of that divine moderation with-out which nothing durable is ever established."

M. Allard has already, in another work, demonstrated the truth of this statement with reference to the Church's action for the abolition of slavery, and in the present volume he shows that the same spirit of moderation presided over her treatment of the monuments of the idolatrous worship of the heathen. Our readers will probably accept this statement with considerable surprise ; it is so contrary to the generally received account of the matter. Most writers have re-echoed the assertions of M. Vasari, who in his *Lives of the Painters* attributes the decay of the fine arts in ancient times to the indiscreet and excessive zeal of the Christians, whose desire to annihilate every memorial of Paganism led them (he says), "to destroy not only the wonderful statues, sculptures, paintings, mosaics, and other ornaments of the false gods, but even

the images of famous men with which the public squares were decorated." And this charge has become one of the stock arguments of modern infidels, who seek to represent religion as the sworn enemy of civilisation.

The careful student will find ample materials in M. Allard's pages for a refutation of this calumny. He makes it clear that the same religious moderation and the same love of the fine arts of which we have seen a proof in Pope Damasus (vol. i. p. 203), characterised the general action of the Church and the legislation of the best Christian emperors. Of course he does not deny that some heathen temples and festivals were interfered with by Christian authority, and others again by the fanaticism of the people; but he shows that this was the exception, and not the rule, and he explains the reasons of these exceptions. But for these and all other details we must refer our readers to the pages of M. Allard himself, in which our readers cannot fail to be interested. He was led to investigate the subject by De Rossi's frequent and important references to it; indeed, like so many other Christian archæologists of the present day, he has only worked a rich vein of ore, for the discovery and due appreciation of which we are all indebted to De Rossi.

Note F (pages 221 and 256).

By an oversight not noticed until it was too late to correct it, different interpretations of the same kneeling female figure sculptured on the end of a sarcophagus have been given in different parts of the work. The fact was, that one of the Editors, to whom the Book on the Sarcophagi had been entrusted, reproduced the interpretation given in the First Edition, which identified the female figure with St. Mary Magdalene, and did not notice that his *confrère* had followed the interpretation of Count de St. Laurent, who considers it to be the Hæmorrhœissa. It would seem from the *Bullettino* (1871, p. 87; 1872, p. 82) that De Rossi adopts the latter interpretation. We must leave our readers to choose between the two.

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PART III.



INSCRIPTIONS.

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EPITAPHS
OF
THE CATACOMBS
OR
CHRISTIAN INSCRIPTIONS IN ROME
DURING THE
FIRST FOUR CENTURIES

BY
REV. J. SPENCER NORTHCOTE, D.D.
CANON OF BIRMINGHAM

LONDON
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1879

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P R E F A C E.

IN our first edition of "Roma Sotterranea" we apologised for the omission of all that concerned the Epitaphs. We said that justice could not be done to this important branch of the subject until the second volume of De Rossi's "*Inscriptiones Christianæ*" should have been published. At the same time it was intimated that a volume was already in course of preparation, which was intended to introduce to the English reading public the principal results of his labours in the field of Christian epigraphy.

Ten years have elapsed, and De Rossi's second volume has not appeared. Our own volume, therefore, has been completed; and is here added, in spite of its incompleteness, as the best contribution which can at present be made towards supplying trustworthy information on a most interesting subject.

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- R.S.* De Rossi's Roma Sotterranea.
I.C. „ Inscriptiones Christianæ.
Bull. „ Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana.
C.I.L. . . . Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. In course of publication by the Academy of Berlin.
O.H. Inscriptionum Latinarum Selectarum Amplissima Collectio. Edited by Orelli; with a third volume, edited by Henzen.
I.R.N. Inscriptiones Regni Neapolitani. Edited by Theodore Mommsen.
L.B. Inscriptions Chrétiennes de la Gaule. Edited by M. E. Le Blant.

PART III.



INSCRIPTIONS.

Their
purpose,

husband's life, yet, so long as this inscription shall last, the memory of his praise and glory shall remain for ever. Aurelia Sabina to my dearest, sweetest, most affectionate, and incomparable husband, with whom I lived without any quarrelling (*lesione animi*) for twenty years and two months." And the common preface to so many of these inscriptions, *ÆTERNÆ MEMORIÆ*, testify to the same truth, viz., that they were dictated by a desire to keep alive, as long as might be, the memory of the deceased.

brevity,

Under these circumstances, it is not to be wondered at that such stones are, as Orelli pathetically laments, "rarely very communicative." It often happens that they provoke rather than satisfy curiosity; they might have told us so much more that it would have been interesting to know, but which we now seek in vain to elicit from their laconic brevity. The author of the *Religio Medici* expresses his disappointment that they "deliver precisely the extent of men's lives, but seldom the manner of their deaths, which history itself so often leaves obscure in the records of memorable persons." But we are not all members of the Royal College of Physicians; and there are other points of view besides the medical from which epitaphs may be studied, and their brevity regretted. However, in spite of their brevity, they have often furnished important contributions to our stores of historical knowledge, and sometimes also in other branches of human science they have rendered valuable services. And independently of these accidental uses which may occasionally be made of them, there is another and a more general interest which almost always attaches to them, if only they contain something more than a name and a date—the interest, namely, which belongs to the records of human thought and feeling under circumstances which are common to us all, viz., the thought of death, as anticipated by ourselves or already suffered by our friends and relatives; the general view taken of life now that it is over; the feelings of regret at the loss of friends; the good qualities selected for commendation in the

usefulness
and interest.

notice of the deceased, and the way in which the love or respect of the survivors is testified. We have most of us, at some time or other of our lives, beguiled an idle hour by spelling out the monuments of some village churchyard with reference to these and similar particulars, and have rarely failed to derive amusement or instruction from the occupation. The same fruits may of course be gathered from the study of collections of monumental inscriptions, whether brought together in museums or copied into books; and if the collection be sufficiently large, and tolerably homogeneous, they often teach us more of the inner life, give us a more lively picture of the temper and mode of thought which characterised the people to whom they belong, than the more elaborate productions of their poets, philosophers, or historians.

Of Christian inscriptions in Rome during the first six centuries, De Rossi has studied more than fifteen thousand, the immense majority of which were taken from the Catacombs; and he tells us that there is still an average yearly addition of about five hundred derived from the same source. This number, vast as it is, is but a poor remnant of what once existed. From the collections made in the eighth and ninth centuries, it appears that there were once at least 170 ancient Christian inscriptions in Rome which had an historical or monumental character; written generally in metre, and to be seen at that time in the places they were intended to illustrate. Of these, only 26 remain, either whole or in parts. In the Roman topographies of the seventh century, 140 sepulchres of famous martyrs and confessors are enumerated: we have recovered only twenty inscribed memorials to assist us in the identification of these. Only nine epitaphs have come to light belonging to the bishops of Rome during these same six centuries; and yet, during that period, there were certainly buried in the suburbs of the city upwards of sixty. Thus, whatever facts we take as the basis of our calculation, it would seem that scarcely a seventh part of the original wealth of the Roman Church in memorials of this

Number of ancient Christian epitaphs known.

Not a seventh part of what once existed.

kind has survived the wreck of ages ; and De Rossi gives it as his conviction that there were once more than 100,000 of them.

Causes of their
destruction in
ancient,

There is evidence in the history of the Catacombs that the work of destruction began in very early times ; and that the Popes did what they could to supply the loss.¹ The invasions of Alaric in 410, of Genseric in 455, Ricimer in 472, Vitiges in 537, and (worst of all) Totila in 546, all did something towards destroying the monuments of ancient Christianity in Rome. Probably the Lombards in 754 did still more ; but we are afraid that by far the greatest amount of loss cannot be set down to the account of ancient barbarians and enemies, but has been due to the carelessness or want of judgment of friends, and in comparatively modern times. Pope Paul I., and the other Pontiffs who followed his example, seem only to have translated the relics from the Catacombs, but to have left inscribed tombstones where they were. But there is good reason to believe that from the eleventh to the fifteenth century, whilst the Catacombs lay buried in darkness, large numbers of these stones were used, not only in Rome, but even in distant places, for the pavements of churches. The shape and the thinness of these slabs of marble recommended them as specially suitable for that kind of tessellated pavement improperly called *opus Alexandrinum*, which was just then in fashion ; and it seems certain from the numerous fragments which remain, that Roman masons used them freely for this purpose, both in the Lateran Basilica within the walls, and in churches at Genazzano, Corneto, and elsewhere. De Rossi suggests, in extenuation of the fault, that perhaps there was an idea of fitness in using in sacred places stones that were already in a manner sacred. However, by and by came the Renaissance, and in some instances these tessellated pavements were destroyed to make room for newer fashions ; and the stones perished with them : even where they were retained, it soon became impossible to

Bull., 1875,
pp. 111-131.

mediaeval,

¹ See inscription in Lateran Museum, iii. 6.

decipher the inscriptions, cut up into many fragments, and worn away by the continual treading of many people.

Even when the Catacombs were rediscovered (in 1578), and modern times. and their importance recognised, this portion of their contents hardly fared better than before. Churches in Rome and Naples, Rocca di Papa, Anagni, Velletri, and hundreds upon Dispersion of those which were preserved, in churches, convents, hundreds of private chapels in different parts of the world, received these stones either for their pavements, as before, or for the ornamentation of their porticoes or sacristies, or to be placed in museums as interesting relics of Christian antiquity. Some private individuals, also, and religious communities, took pleasure in collecting and preserving them in the walls of their houses and cloisters. The museums which had been formed before this time had not cared to possess such things. On the contrary, they were rigorously excluded as rude and unclassical in style. Out of fourteen or fifteen Lapidarian collections which De Rossi can trace as having been made in the palaces or villas of learned Romans between the middle of the fifteenth and the middle of the sixteenth century, only three had any Christian inscriptions at all; and these only one in each. Even in two of these instances it would seem to have been admitted by an oversight, since there is nothing remarkable in either of them; and the third had been selected apparently because of the beauty and accuracy with which the letters were engraved, and because of the monogram which stood at the head of it.

But after the days of Bosio a more Christian taste began to prevail, and De Rossi is able to enumerate some twenty or more Italian nobles, besides ecclesiastical dignitaries and religious communities, who interested themselves in making a collection of inscriptions and other objects from the Catacombs. Of course very many of these private collections have suffered the usual fate of such things; they have been sold and dispersed on the death of the collector, or some change in the circumstances or tastes of the family. Those that were made by museums.

Existing
collections in
Rome.

religious bodies have not suffered in this way, *e.g.*, that of the Jesuits in the Kircherian Museum at the Roman College; those of the Benedictines at St. Paul's in Rome and St. Peter's in Perugia; those of the Camaldolese at St. Gregory's on Monte Celio, and of the Canons Regular at St. Agnes' and St. Laurence's, both *fuori le mura*.

Action of the
Popes with
reference to
them.

After all, however, these collections are very limited in extent, and quite unequal to the greatness and importance of the subject. Nothing really worthy could be hoped for unless the Sovereign Pontiffs could be persuaded to take the matter in hand, and carry it through to a successful issue. It had engaged the attention of several of them at various times from the middle of the fifteenth century. Pope Nicholas V., A.D. 1447, seems to have entertained the idea of collecting all the Lapidarian monuments of early Christianity which were at that time known to exist; and both Eugenius IV., his immediate predecessor, and Calixtus III., who succeeded him, and Sixtus IV., a few years later, A.D. 1471, forbade, under heavy penalties, the alienation or destruction of anything belonging to this class of monuments. When Leo X., too, appointed Raphael to superintend the works at the rebuilding of St. Peter's, he gave him a special charge that the *res lapidaria* should not be injured. In later times, these injunctions became more earnest and more frequent in proportion to the increasing number and importance of the inscriptions that were brought to light. Still nothing practical appears to have been devised until the reign of Clement XI., when Boldetti proposed that collections of Pagan and Christian inscriptions should be arranged opposite to one another on the walls of the long gallery which leads to the Vatican Library and Museum. The learned prelate Francesco Bianchini supported this recommendation, and it was cordially approved by the Pope. The unhappy circumstances of the times, however, prevented him from carrying it out.

The plan of a
Lapidarian
Gallery pro-
jected;

After the lapse of another half century, learned men pressed upon Benedict XIV., A.D. 1750, the foundation of a Christian

Museum, in the interests not only of learning but of religion ; lost sight of ; and the work was at last taken in hand, but not wisely conducted. A hall was selected in the Vatican Library, and it was determined to arrange along its walls as many of the ancient Christian sarcophagi as could be brought together. Many were bought from private individuals into whose possession they had passed ; others were removed from public places where they had been used for fountains and other profane purposes. Unhappily, however, they were not left in their integrity. For economy of space, the *bassi-rilievi* were first sawn off from the monuments to which they belonged, and then, for symmetry's sake, parts of different sculptures were put together to fill up the allotted space, and even parts added or taken away that they might fit exactly the Procrustean measure. As to the inscriptions, the Bishop of Anagni was called upon to supply an inventory of all that Marangoni had sent to that city, A.D. 1720-40, as though there were an intention of requiring restitution of them ; but this intention, if ever entertained, was certainly not fulfilled. A few only were taken up from the pavement of the Churches of Sta. Maria in Trastevere and San Martino ai Monti in Rome ; and these, together with others then recently extracted from the Catacombs, were arranged above the cornice of the Library.

Thus Boldetti's excellent idea of forming a grand Lapidarian Gallery, where the contrast between Pagan and Christian epitaphs might be conveniently studied, seemed to have been altogether lost sight of, whilst its execution became day by day more difficult. At last, in the beginning of this century, Pius VII. intrusted the work to the celebrated scholar Gaetano Marini. Under his direction, four or five private collections were bought ; other specimens were purchased from the dealers in such articles ; and to these were added all the recent acquisitions from the Catacombs, until about 1100 had been brought together. Marini, however, took no pains to make the most even of the paltry amount of materials thus collected. Whilst

and at last
badly executed.

distributing the Pagan inscriptions into various classes, he merely inserted the Christian monuments into the wall, without giving any indication where they had been found, or making any attempts to classify them, beyond separating the few which contain the names of the Consuls from those which are without this chronological note. His work, therefore, left much to desire, both on account of its defective arrangement and its narrow limits. And already during the reign of Gregory XVI. there was talk of a Christian Museum at the Lateran under the superintendence of Father Marchi. The space, however, devoted to the Gregorian Museum proved to be too small for the purpose ; it was soon entirely filled with monuments of classical antiquity, so that it was reserved for our late Holy Father, Pope Pius IX., to found another Museum there, which should be exclusively Christian. To Father Marchi was intrusted the collection and arrangement of all monuments of painting or sculpture ; to De Rossi all that concerned Christian epigraphy.

Christian
Museum at
the Lateran
projected by
Gregory XVI.;

and executed
by Pius IX.

The inscrip-
tions there,
whence
obtained by
De Rossi ;

and how
arranged.

The bulk of the materials placed at De Rossi's disposal were inscriptions that had been accumulated during the last thirty years and more in the storerooms of the Vatican Library ; others were contributed by the Municipality from the storerooms of the Capitoline Museum ; others were recovered from the chapels and sacristies of convents, where some of them had been hidden out of sight for nearly two hundred years ; the few that had been placed over the cornice of the Vatican Library by Benedict XIV. were transferred, and a selection made from those which Marini had placed in the Lapidarian Gallery ; finally, plaster casts were taken of others which it was not desirable to move from the sites with which they were historically associated. A considerable number of inscriptions having thus been brought together, it became necessary to fix upon some principle of classification. Chronology and topography obviously suggested two such principles, each very valuable in its way, yet neither of them on the whole satisfactory. Chronology was precisely the point which had hitherto been too much neglected ; it was still

the most difficult and tedious part of De Rossi's daily archaeological labours. The time was not yet come when a true and certain chronology of the subterranean cemeteries had been established ; still less had definite chronological canons as to the monuments which they contain been sufficiently discussed, defined, and accepted by the learned. Any chronological arrangement, therefore, that might have been attempted would have seemed arbitrary, and could only be justified by long dissertations in books, not *primâ facie* by the inscriptions themselves. Nor would a topographical arrangement have fared better. The precise spot where each inscription had been found was often enveloped in much obscurity ; and, moreover, since many of the subterranean cemeteries had been in use contemporaneously, a merely topographical arrangement would have involved many useless repetitions, and led to no satisfactory results. It was determined, therefore, to arrange them mainly according to the sense or contents of the inscriptions, without altogether excluding, however, as we shall presently see, the other principles of division, both chronological and topographical.

We have entered thus minutely into the history of the formation of these various collections of Christian inscriptions, because ignorance of it has led some writers into grave errors. They have spoken of the Lapidarian Gallery at the Vatican, for example, as though it were a selection of the most ancient, curious, and valuable specimens of Christian epigraphy, "made under Papal superintendence," and therefore (as they did not hesitate to say) not made in a spirit of loyal devotion to the truth, but in obedience to the exigencies of theological controversy ; whereas, as we have shown, it was really no selection at all. The only selection that has ever been made under this condition is that of which we have just spoken at the Lateran ; and even this was no selection from the entire treasures of antiquity, but only from the fragments that could be recovered after the long-continued plunder of a wreck. That this figure is no exaggeration, the

Importance of
this sketch.

history we have given sufficiently proves. The number of ancient epitaphs actually in existence is quite insignificant when compared with those which have been destroyed or lost. However, small as it is, the Lateran selection is very interesting, and it belongs to our subject to give some account of it.

Roman
inscriptions
copied

But, first, we must say a few words about other collections of Christian inscriptions that are to be found not in museums but in libraries; that is to say, not of the original stones, but of written or printed copies of their contents.

by scholars

There is no evidence of any scholar having devoted his attention to this subject before the days of Charlemagne. But in the intellectual movement which characterised that age, some of Alcuin's scholars were careful to copy inscriptions which they saw in the course of their travels, especially those on public monuments in Rome. They made their selection, however, not so much in the interests either of archæology or of history, as for purely literary purposes. They gave the preference to inscriptions that were written in verse, and (as it would seem) they aimed chiefly at making a collection of *formulae*, which they might imitate in their own compositions. Hence they omitted to specify all those particulars which are most essential to their value in the eyes of an archæologist or historian, such as their date, their authorship, their precise locality. We are sure of this, because in some few instances the stones which they copied still exist, and we find on them the very particulars we were in want of, but which had not been inserted in the MS. copies.

of the eighth
and ninth
centuries,

C.I.L., vi. p. 9.

The oldest collection of this kind now known was made by some visitor to Rome in the eighth or ninth century, who returned to Switzerland by way of Ticino, and probably took his MS. home with him to some monastery of which he was a member in that country. It was once in the library of the monastery of Pfeffers, and is now at Einseidlen. The whole collection does not exceed eighty, and about a third of them are Christian. It was first published by Mabillon in 1685, and has

been quite recently republished by the Berlin Academy as a fitting introduction to their "*Inscriptiones Urbis Romæ Latinæ*." Other collections were made about the same time and under similar circumstances ; that is to say, they were made by Northern scholars visiting Rome, and anxious to carry home with them some of the literary wealth with which they found that city so abundantly stored. At least, this seems to be the most probable account that can be given of them ; and hence it is that no vestige of such MSS. has ever been found in the libraries of Italy, but only in Germany, France, and Switzerland ; and it is conjectured that similar treasures may yet lie hid in some of the libraries of our own country.

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries many such collections were made, both by Italian and German scholars ; and of the fourteenth and fifteenth. for the most part, however, they were of Heathen inscriptions only, or, if any of Christian origin were admitted, they were both few in number, and not in any way distinguished from the more numerous memorials of Paganism. The first distinct collection of *Christian* inscriptions was made towards the very close of the fifteenth century by one Petrus Sabinus, a Professor of Humanities in the Roman University, and a friend and fellow academician of Pomponius Letus. They were about 200 in number, collected (he tells us) with great diligence from the marble slabs or the mosaics of the Roman churches ; and even these formed an appendix to a much larger collection of Pagan inscriptions. It is only in our own day, and by the indefatigable perseverance of De Rossi, that this work, written in 1495, and dedicated to Charles VIII. of France, then making his triumphal progress through Italy, has been discovered in St. Mark's Library, at Venice.

Sabinus was followed by many others of more or less distinction, who were probably incited to undertake the labour of collecting the memorials of past ages by seeing the work of destruction, the burning of libraries, the sacking and pulling down of churches, that was then going on by the soldiers of the

Emperor Charles V. It is not worth while to enumerate the names of these collectors, since they preceded the discovery of the Catacombs, and cannot therefore be said even to have laid the foundation of those works which have succeeded that event. It will be sufficient to observe, that though they admitted into their pages inscriptions of comparatively recent date, yet the whole number thus preserved to us falls short of a thousand.

Other collections by Bosio, Fabretti, Boldetti, Marangoni, and others.

Bosio made a most careful collection of all the inscriptions he found in the Catacombs, and seems to have intended to publish them in a separate volume ; dying, however, before any of his works had been printed, Severano, to whom his papers were confided, followed a different arrangement, and the epitaphs appeared as an appendix to the account of each cemetery in which they had been discovered. Fabretti, Boldetti, and Marangoni (all of them officially connected with subterranean Rome, and the two last having devoted nearly forty years to its study) made considerable additions to this collection ; unhappily, however, they did not imitate the minute care and accuracy of their predecessor, so that their copies of inscriptions cannot be altogether depended upon. Lupi, Buonarroti, Bottari, Zaccaria, and a host of other names now crowd upon us, each making contributions, more or less valuable, to the *res epigraphica* of ancient Christendom.

But such a multitude of materials, dispersed in fragments over so many different volumes, and receiving fresh additions almost daily from the excavations always being continued in the Catacombs, required to be brought together into one body and to be carefully and judiciously arranged. It was a gigantic work, demanding immense industry and perseverance, great tact also and skill in arrangement ; moreover, the undivided attention of a sufficiently long life. No wonder, then, that though many conceived the idea of undertaking it, yet all failed : to some was wanting patience ; to others, a well-digested plan ; to all, time ; and the only result of all these abortive efforts has been a number of voluminous MSS. in the Vatican and

other libraries, and of incomplete works in the world at large.

The history of all these failures must have suggested discouraging thoughts to De Rossi as he recorded them in the preface to his own collection, in which he undertakes to publish all the Christian inscriptions of Rome during the first six centuries.

De Rossi undertakes to publish a complete collection.

And indeed, when we think of the shortness of human life, the immense extent of the work to be accomplished, and the scrupulous exactness without which De Rossi will not be content to publish, we feel many misgivings lest the same fate should await him also, and the magnificent volume he has published remain always an *opus imperfectum*.

He had begun to apply himself to the work in the year 1842; in 1844, Father Marchi published an announcement to this effect, without the knowledge of the author. In 1846, the very year of his accession, Pope Pius IX. declared his intention of adopting the work as a public undertaking, and defraying its expenses. It was then hoped that the publication would begin in the course of three or four years, but it was delayed by various causes, both private and public, till 1857, and the first volume did not really appear until the year 1864. Fourteen more years have passed, and we are still without the second volume. We believe that it is

First volume appears in 1864.

ready, or very nearly ready, for the press; but the property of the Camera Apostolica, which published the first volume, having passed into the hands of the Italian Government, political complications now add their quota to the many hindrances of the work. All who have at heart the interests either of learning or religion—for it is of very great importance to both—must sincerely hope that these obstacles may be soon removed. Meanwhile, we have reason to be thankful for the instalment already received; for this first volume contains what may be called the framework or skeleton into which all other parts must ultimately be fitted. It deals with the driest, most difficult, and yet most important part of the subject—we mean the chronology; and it deals with it in a way which has commanded the approbation of all competent judges.

Its contents arranged,

not topo-
graphically,

In modern times, it seems to be acknowledged that, as a general rule, a topographical arrangement of inscriptions is the most scientific and convenient. It has the advantage of enabling the reader to distinguish local peculiarities from universal practice ; moreover, it facilitates the work of interpretation, and enables us to complete fragmentary portions of history with greater accuracy. And though De Rossi's inscriptions came all from one place, Rome and its neighbourhood (within a radius of thirty miles, more or less), yet he himself too considers this topographical arrangement so important, that he will adopt it as far as he can, *i.e.*, he will assign all the epitaphs which he publishes to the several Catacombs or other cemeteries whence they were originally taken. But if he had made this the only principle of his arrangement, he would have risked the loss of that which to most persons will be the chief value of the collection, *viz.*, the light which it will throw upon the doctrines, the discipline, and temper of mind of the early Church. For each inscription, taken by itself, is so short and simple, that it scarcely seems adequate perhaps for the illustration of anything. It is only when all these feeble rays of light are gathered together and concentrated in one focus that they can be shown to be of any real value.

nor theologi-
cally,

But neither again, on the other hand, could he adopt a theological arrangement, such as had been proposed by Zaccaria and partially carried out by Marini ; otherwise he would certainly have made shipwreck of his labour from another cause. For inscriptions are only valuable as testimonies to matters of fact and history when their own antiquity has been first demonstrated. And if this is true of inscriptions generally, how much more so of these, against which so formidable an amount of theological prejudice was sure to be arrayed the moment they were brought into court.

but chrono-
logically.

De Rossi, therefore, with excellent judgment, has devoted his first volume to a chronological arrangement of his treasures, or at least of a portion of his treasures ; that portion, namely,

which bears its exact age stamped upon it. Not a single inscription among the fourteen or fifteen hundred here presented to the public but bears the name of some Consul, or other historical or chronological note whereby it can be assigned with certainty either to this or that year in particular, or to one of two, three, or half a dozen years, to which the same notes belong indifferently. Some of the inscriptions may or may not be interesting and important from another point of view, historical, philological, or theological; it matters not; they receive no favour on that account in the volume of which we are speaking. They may have very important evidence to give by and by, but the time is not yet come for this. For the present, each witness, as he comes into court, is questioned and cross-questioned very closely as to his age, and then is relentlessly set aside, to be recalled perhaps on some future occasion. "I fear," says the author, in the first chapter of his *Prolegomena*, *I.C.*, i. p. 1. "that lovers of Christian antiquity, as soon as they have dipped into this volume, and seen that scarcely anything is explained in it but the lists of Consuls, the cycles of the sun and moon, and other chronological items of this sort (whereas they were anxiously looking for some illustration of the history, the dogmas, or the rites and ceremonies of the Christian Church), will feel themselves grievously disappointed and deceived. Perhaps, also, impatient of the tedious length and difficulties of this circuitous route, they will highly disapprove and condemn my whole plan. Such persons I certainly would not persuade to weary and disgust themselves by a diligent study of these pages; I feel keenly, and frankly acknowledge, that only a few, initiated as it were into the mysteries of the science of epigraphy, will be able to derive either pleasure or profit from their perusal. Let others, then, be content, if they will, with running through it in the most cursory manner, or let them leave it alone altogether, unless they happen to light on something which arrests their attention, and seems to them worth examining. Doubtless this is a painful fact, and much

to be regretted, and most assuredly none regrets it more than myself. There is nothing I would more anxiously desire than that the fruits of my labour should be at once appreciated and enjoyed by many persons ; it would be much more to my taste to gratify the desire of the multitude than to provide for the learned few. Nevertheless, I had rather adopt a plan that shall be solid and true than one which is only tempting in appearance. I hold the substantial benefits that are to be derived from this science to be infinitely more important than mere show and display : and I have resolved on beginning my vast work in this way, because I know of no other whereby I can lay good solid foundations, sufficient to bear the weight of the building which I mean to raise on it. For there is nothing that people are more anxious for in this matter, nothing that they are wont more eagerly to demand of me, than that I should, first of all, establish with certainty the dates of all the monuments I produce. Without this, they are either useless, or, at best, of very slight and doubtful use, for the elucidation of Christian antiquity.”¹

¹ The historical sketch in the early part of this chapter is taken from a “*Memoria*” on the “*Museo Epigrafico Cristiano Pio-Lateranense*,” written by De Rossi, and presented with photographic plates of the whole collection to Pope Pius IX. on the occasion of his episcopal jubilee in 1877.

CHAPTER II.

A VISIT TO THE LATERAN MUSEUM.

Some general features of the inscriptions collected there—(1.) Different style of engraving; some excellent, some very bad, executed by unprofessional hands; some only painted; several in the Catacombs scratched in the mortar—(2.) Mixture of languages, even on Pagan monuments—The use of Greek ordinarily a token of antiquity—(3.) Corrupt forms of spelling—(4.) The presence of the letters D.M.—(5.) Minute measurement of length of life—General arrangement of the inscriptions—Columns I.–III. Public sacred inscriptions—IV.–VII. Chronological—XVIII.–XXIV. Topographical—XXI.–XXIV. Not from the Roman Catacombs—XVIII. Of single names only, and painted, not engraved, from St. Priscilla—XX. Quite in classical style, from Cæmeterium Ostrianum—XIX. All Greek, from Prætextatus.

THE first step towards a practical introduction to the study of Christian epigraphy should be a visit to the Christian Museum at the Lateran, and a careful inspection of the inscriptions that are collected there. We have seen how this collection was formed; let us now take at least a cursory view of its contents. We shall have occasion to return to some parts of it again, but it will be useful to gain some general notions about the whole before we enter on any detailed examination of its parts.

The feature which will probably be the first to strike most persons inspecting these epitaphs is the great diversity of style in their execution. This varies from some of the most beautiful specimens of monumental engraving which could be desired, *e.g.*, in Columns I. and III., to the most wretched and illegible scribbling. Of course this is not to be wondered at. There would have been different degrees of rank and wealth,

Some general features of the inscriptions collected in the Lateran Museum.

(1.) Different style of engraving; some excellent, some very bad, executed by unprofessional hands.

of skill, taste, talent, and education among the ancient Christians as amongst ourselves; and this inequality would have been reflected in this as in a thousand other ways. It is not, however, the superior excellence of some specimens which strikes us so much, as the extreme badness of others; and the explanation of this seems to be, that the work was often done not by professional hands or with proper instruments, but rudely and hurriedly scratched with the sharp edge of the trowel, or even with a nail, by some sorrowing survivor when he revisited the grave, or, more frequently, as he still lingered by its side after the funeral service was over. In some, and these the most ancient, the letters are not cut at all, but only written upon the surface in red or black paint. The inscriptions on the famous tombs of the Scipios were originally written only in this way (in red), and so also the inscriptions in some of the Etruscan sepulchres. And Mommsen says that the fashion of incising the epitaphs came from Greece.

Some only painted.

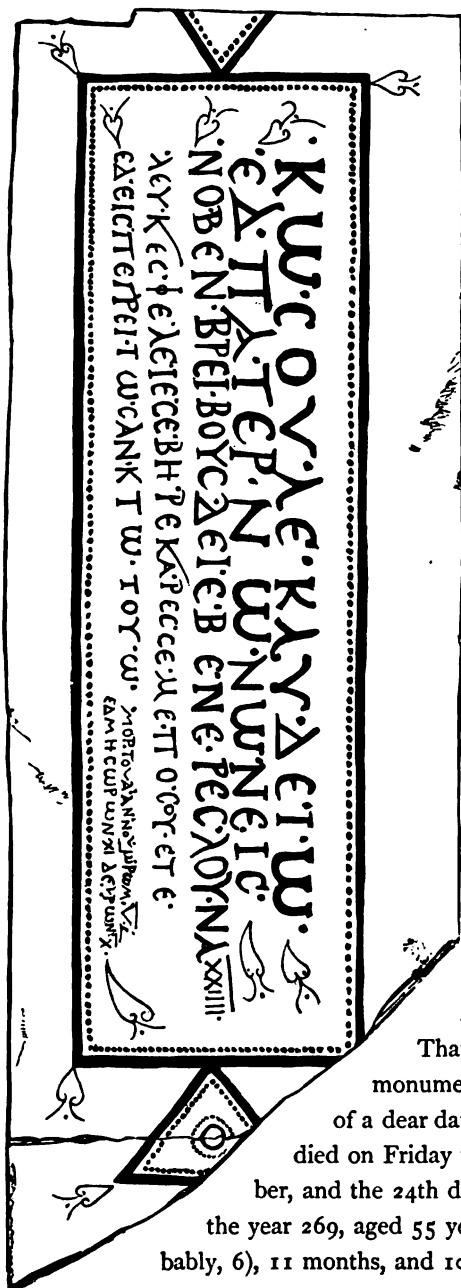
C.I.L., i. p. 11.

Several in the Catacombs scratched in the mortar.

In the Catacombs there were other inscriptions of a still more primitive simplicity, merely traced in the fresh mortar with which the gravestones were secured. These, of course, could not be transferred to the museum. Many have been wholly or partially destroyed by the opening of the tombs which they had once been intended to identify. Several, however, still remain in their places, looking as fresh and perfect as though they had been made but yesterday. The visitor to the Catacombs should not fail to notice them; e.g., in the Cemetery of St. Agnes, near the old entrance to it, *Abundantia in pace Tur...antia in pace Kal Junii Nepotiano et Facundo Coss, i.e., June 1st, A.D. 336.*

(2.) Mixture of languages.

The next point which arrests the student's attention as he walks through the gallery at the Lateran is the curious mixture of languages which these epitaphs exhibit. In some instances Latin and Greek are mingled in the strangest confusion; the epitaph begins perhaps in one language and ends in another; or, still more frequently, the Latin language is used, but the



words are written
 in Greek charac-
 ters. Certainly a
 scholar might be
 excused for poring
 a long time over
 the inscription
 which we here
 present to him, be-
 fore he discovered
 that it was simply
 CONSULE
 CLAUDIO ET
 PATERNO,
 NONIS NO-
 VEMBRIBUS,
 DIE VENE-
 RIS, LUNA
 XXIV., LEU-
 CES FILIÆ
 SEVERÆ
 CARISSIMÆ
 POSUIT ET
 I SPIRITO
 SANCTO TUO.
 MORTUA AN-
 NORUM VL.
 ET MENSIVM
 XI. DIERUM X.

That is to say, it is a
 monument to the memory
 of a dear daughter, Severa, who
 died on Friday the 5th of Novem-
 ber, and the 24th day of the moon, in
 the year 269, aged 55 years (or, more pro-
 bably, 6), 11 months, and 10 days.

We will add another specimen, much more beautifully engraved, belonging to the year 345; it is all written in Greek letters, but the first line only is of Greek words, the other two of Latin—

ΣΩΚΡΑΤΗΣ ΑΕΙΜΝΗΣΤΟΣ ΦΙΛΟΣ [θεός]
 ΔΗΠΟΘΕΙΤΟΥΣ Θ Κ ΩΚΤΒ ΑΜ [αυτῶν]
 ANNOVC TPIITINTA IN ΠΑΚΕ.

“Socrates, ever to be remembered, beloved by God, buried on the 23d of September, when Amantius was Consul (A.D. 345). He lived thirty years. In peace.”

The use of
 Greek ordi-
 narily a token
 of antiquity.

Bull., 1865, p. 52.

In a future chapter we shall see reason for believing that this was the epitaph of a foreigner who had died in Rome; and occasional epitaphs of this kind, belonging to strangers, are of course liable to recur at any period of the Church's history; but, speaking generally, the use of the Greek language on epitaphs of the Catacombs is a note of antiquity. De Rossi considers that it creates a presumption that the epitaph in question was written before the middle of the third century.

This prevalence of the Greek language among the more ancient families of Christian epitaphs falls in with the theory so much insisted upon by a modern historian of note, that the primitive Church at Rome was composed mainly of Jews and Greeks.¹ At the same time, other evidence that comes to us from the same source certainly convicts of exaggeration another part of his statements—viz., that the Church “contained few, if any, genuine Romans.” We must remember that Greek was at that time very commonly spoken in Rome, and indeed everywhere else throughout the whole civilised world; moreover, that the Christian religion was first preached by Jews, among whom Greek had long since very generally taken the place of the vernacular language. It was spoken, and almost universally understood, even in Palestine itself; and it was certainly the language most common among the Jews scattered all over the world. Hence we are not surprised at the almost entire

¹ St. Paul in Rome, by Very Rev. C. Merivale, p. 36.

absence of the Hebrew language from the epitaphs in the Catacombs (only a single example, we believe, having yet been found), nor at the prevalence of the Greek.

We shall see in the course of this chapter specimens of a large class of epitaphs from one of the subterranean cemeteries, written with very great elegance, both in Greek characters and in the Greek language; and inscriptions of the same kind are to be found in the more ancient parts of several others—*e.g.*, on a stone of unusual size, closing a grave of the second century in the Cemetery of Domitilla, we read:—

ΦΛ CΑΒΕΙΝΟC ΚΑΙ
ΤΙΤΙΑΝΗ ΑΔΕΛΦΟΙ.

Bull., 1875,
p. 65.
Tav., v. 4.

“Flavius Sabinus and Titiana, brother and sister.”

The use of the characters of one language to express the words of another, which we saw in the two previous examples, must be attributed to the carelessness or ignorance of the engraver, who perhaps was hardly conscious what language he was using. This at least is the supposition of Mommsen with regard to a similar anomaly to be observed on some sepulchral inscriptions in Etruria. In the most ancient tombs of that country the name of the deceased was written or engraved in the Etruscan language; but in proportion as the use of the Latin tongue spread throughout the country, a number of hybrid *tituli* were made of Etruscan words written in Latin characters, or of Latin with traces of the Etruscan language corrupting them. Even among the Pagan monuments in Rome there are not wanting examples of Latin words written in Greek characters, *e.g.*, ΣΕCΞΤΟC ΚΛΩΔΙΟC, ANTI ΔΙΟΝ ΤΕPTION, &c.; and they are very frequent on the walls of Pompeii.

C.I.L., i. p. 254.

C.I.L., i. p. 212.

Even on
Pagan monu-
ments.

Another point of interest to a scholar, as he runs his eye over these ancient monuments, will be various corrupt forms of spelling, partaking for the most part of a phonetic character, and foreshadowing in some particulars the formation of modern

(3.) Corrupt
forms of
spelling.

Italian. We will only mention two, which are perhaps the most prominent. The first is the frequent disuse of the final consonant, especially in the case of pronouns, the names of numbers, and other words in very common use, such as *septe*, *nove*, *dece*, &c. And the second is the prefix of a vowel to facilitate the pronunciation of an initial *s* before a consonant, as *ispiritus* for *spiritus*, of which we have already seen an example in page 19, and which is to be noticed universally in the Latin inscriptions of Spain.

C.I.L., ii.
p. 395.

(4.) The presence of the letters D.M.

Looking more closely at the substance of the inscriptions in the Lateran, the student cannot fail to have his attention arrested by the appearance of the letters D.M. or D.M.S. engraved at the head of some few of them. If he is a novice in the study, he will be startled by this trace of Heathenism on Christian monuments; or, if the fact is not new to him, he will probably be aware that some authors have endeavoured to build a theory upon it as to the joint use of the Catacombs as places of burial by Pagans and Christians promiscuously. In either case, they require a word of explanation. The truth

Very rare.

is, that out of fifteen thousand ancient Christian inscriptions, the obnoxious letters do not occur upon more than forty, *i.e.*, on one out of 375, whereas upon the Pagan epitaphs of the same period they are found on 95 out of a hundred. The letters only came into fashion on Pagan tombstones under the earlier Cæsars; but in process of time they became so common as to be looked upon as the distinctive marks of a mortuary inscription, and were doubtless engraved beforehand on tombstones kept ready for sale. In this way we account for finding them at the beginning of a Greek inscription in Pisa, and on what seems to have been the gravestone of a Jew in Rome.

C.I.L., ii. 463.

O.H., 4720.

How explained.
R.S., i. 343.

Of course, it is quite possible that in the same way some careless or ill-instructed Christians may have used them without taking heed to their presence, or even understanding their meaning. Sometimes there is evidence of an attempt on the part of the Christian to erase the objectionable title; some-

Bull., 1865,
p. 40.

times it is Christianised by the insertion of the sacred monogram of Christ between the D.M. and the S, or by its addition both before and after the title; and this has been found on inscriptions in Sardinia, France, Greece, and Syria. *Bull.*, 1873, p. 129.
L.M., viii. 7.

It is remarkable that in several instances the apparently Pagan title is followed by more than usually unequivocal tokens of the Christian faith, *e.g.* :—

I.C., No. 1192.

D.M.
LEOPARDUS QUI VIXIT [ANNOS]
ET MENSES N. XI. R S S[ANCTUM]
ELATUS EST VIII. IDUS AUG.
AUG.

We do not know the exact date of this, but the phrase “gave back his holy spirit” (*reddidit spiritum sanctum*) sounds older than the fourth century, so does the classical word *elatus* for “buried.” On the other hand, the letters are never found on the oldest Christian epitaphs, but generally on those later than the middle of the third century. De Rossi thinks it probable that they were sometimes intended to stand for *Dignæ* or *Dulci Memoria*. He does not accept the suggestion of Boldetti, Fabretti, and others, that they were meant for *Deo Magno* or *Maximo*, excepting in such cases as have been mentioned, where they are united with the monogram. On the other hand, he would not willingly condemn the writers of these epitaphs of superstition and a voluntary adherence to Pagan errors, except upon irrefragable evidence; and this is certainly not forthcoming.

One of the most remarkable examples by which it is attempted to establish the charge of superstition is an inscription to be seen in the Museum at the Capitol, a copy of which is also in the Lateran. It stands thus :—

Special instance examined.

D.M.A. SACRUM XL.
LEOPARDUM IN PACEM CUM SPIRITA SANTA ACCEP
TUM EUMTE ABEATIS INNOCINEM
POSUER. PAR. Q. AN. N. VII. MEN. VII.

L.M., ix. 32.

O.H., 4775.

Dr. McCaul¹ compares with this a heathen inscription in which a wife calls upon the Manes *commendatum habeatis meum conjugem*; and he concludes that "there can be no question that in the Christian inscription his parents asked the Pagan deities of the unseen world after death to receive with favour their innocent son." Now we cannot deny that at first sight there seems to be a certain close resemblance between the petition of this poor Pagan widow and that of the Christian parents of the boy Leopardus. Moreover, other Pagan epitaphs might have been quoted, in which the very same word "receive" is used as applied to the conduct of the Manes towards the dead. Nevertheless, it seems to us not only unnecessary, but even impossible, to accept Dr. McCaul's conclusion.

C.I.L., ii.
No. 2255.

First of all, the letters of the title are confessedly uncommon, and very difficult of interpretation. We do not accept, any more than he does, Raoul Rochette's expansion of the formula into *Divis martyribus sacrum quadraginta*, because we know of no other example or authority for such a rendering; and therefore this suggested interpretation seems almost as daring as that of the good monk who insisted on interpreting the letters I.O.M. on an old stone over the doorway of his convent *Introitus omnium monachorum*, instead of *Jovi optimo maximo*. At the same time D.M.A. is a very unusual contraction for *Dis manibus*. We do not know of any other example. Of course, D.M.S. is the most common formula; in some places—e.g., in Lyons and part of the Grisons territory—the S. is uniformly omitted. But there are occasional variations, such as in Spain, D.O.M., which Hubner would render *Dis omnibus manibus* (or *Deo optimo maximo*), refusing altogether to accept *Dis occultis manibus*, which some had suggested. On the other hand, he seems to admit *Dis inferis manibus* as the explanation of D.I.M. on an inscription in Lisbon, which Orelli rejects on a similar inscription in Perugia, preferring to see in the first

C.I.L., iii.
p. 1185.C.I.L., ii.
No. 2684.C.I.L., li.
No. 238.

O.H., 4439.

¹ Christian Epitaphs of the First Six Centuries, p. 61. London, Bell & Daldy.

two letters only an abbreviation of *Dis*. If this abbreviation be admitted, M.A. might in like manner be received as the substitute for *manibus*, as Dr. McCaul suggests, therein following the lead of Mabillon. We cannot propose any other reading which is more probable ; but even so, there still remains an insoluble difficulty in the numeral XL.

Setting aside, then, for a moment the whole of the title as though it were not there, the epitaph begins, according to one of the most ancient Christian formulas, commending the deceased "to peace, in the company of the holy souls." Then, having these *spiritus sancta* present to their minds, the parents go on (as it seems to us) to call upon them to receive their innocent son ; finally, they add the usual particulars as to the length of his life. When we remember how frequently the writers of these epitaphs violate all laws of correct writing, and in the course of a few lines pass from the third person to the first without any warning, following the sequence of ideas rather than of grammar, it seems to us much more natural to suppose that the address was made to the holy souls than to the *Di manes* of the title, even without any reference to the theological aspect of the matter. And it is obvious to observe that it is thus brought into the strictest harmony with several other epitaphs which we shall have occasion to quote in a future chapter, but of which we may be allowed here to present a single specimen because of its great similarity to the epitaph under discussion :—

PAULO FILIO MERENTI IN PA
CEM TE SUSCIPIAN OMNIUM ISPIRI
TA SANCTORUM QUI VIXIT ANNOS II. DIES N.L.

Bull., 1875, p. 19.

"To Paul, a well-deserving son, who lived two years and fifty days.
May the spirits of all the saints receive thee into peace."

On the whole, then, we conclude that these forty examples of the letters of a Pagan formula inserted at the head of a Christian monument are too few in number and too doubtful

in character to warrant the conclusions that have been sometimes drawn from them. There may have been carelessness in some instances, or real ignorance in others. Some may have even thought the use of them an indifferent matter, as the Christian Emperor who, at a much later period, did not hesitate to speak of tombs as *Ædificia Manium*;¹ others may have thought it convenient to retain them, though understanding by them very different words from those which the Pagans understood. We do not know of more than one Christian monument in which the words are inserted at full length, and not one which indulges in any of those addresses to the Manes which are not uncommon on Pagan monuments; as in the case of the widow already mentioned, who, after commending her husband to the good keeping of the spirits, prays them "to be indulgent to him, so that she may see him in the hours of night, and even to add her death to his, that so she may the more quickly and sweetly enjoy his company again."

(5.) Minute measurement of length of life,

I.R.H., 336a.
337a.

O.H., 4341.
4718.

R.S., iii. xviii. 56.

Pp. 96, 219.

Another peculiarity on some of these inscriptions which we think a scholar is likely to notice, is that the length of life is measured with an exactness quite unfamiliar to modern practice. It would have been less surprising if this had been confined to the epitaphs of children, but we find the mention of days, and even of fractions of days, in the case of lives which have been extended to fifty or sixty years. On a Pagan monument to a boy, the child of a slave born in the house, his mistress recorded of her "dearest *Verna*" that he had lived five years, two months, six days, and six hours; and that the accuracy of her arithmetic might be tested, she sets down the days of his birth and his death, which we see were both included in her calculation. In like manner, De Rossi gives us, from the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, the inscription of a Christian father to his son, "who had lived one year, three months, twenty-three days, six hours and a half. In peace." And we find another in the collection of Fabretti on which the reckoning is even

¹ Cod. Theod. IX., xvii. 4.

more minute, for it names four hours and six *scrupuli* or fifteen minutes (a *scrupulus* being the twenty-fourth part of an hour).

In some instances the duration of married life is measured with the same precision ; as where a man puts up a *titulus* "to his dearest wife, with whom I lived so many years"—the stone is imperfect just where the number was inscribed—"six months, three days, and fifteen hours." It is not easy to divine the motive which dictated this epitaph, for the widower goes on to say, "On the day of her death I gave the greatest thanks both to gods and men" (*apud Deos et apud homines*). In another instance, a wife burying her husband says she has lived with him three years, two months, and eleven hours.

Occasionally, not only the day but even the hour of birth is mentioned, and not only the day of the month but the day of the week. In some of these instances, De Rossi bids us suspect a leaning on the part of the writers towards the mysteries of astrology—*e.g.*, in a monument of the year 364, a child who was born at the fourth hour of the night (it is not said on what day) seems to have died "on Saturday, the 8th of May, on the twentieth day of the moon, in the sign Capricorn;" and De Rossi shows that each of these particulars was held in ancient times to be unlucky. Another inscription tells of a boy, who lived to be more than six years old, that he had been born at the sixth hour of the night, on a Wednesday in the month of May; died at the tenth hour on the 24th of June, and was buried at the fourth hour—we presume on the following day, as we gather from many inscriptions that this was the usual practice—and that a large number attended his funeral (*elatus est frequentia maximâ*). It is recorded on several of the later inscriptions from the Cemetery of St. Callixtus on what day of the week a child had been born or had died; and the days are usually called by their Pagan names, *dies Solis*, *dies Mercurii*, *dies Veneris*, &c., just as they are called also in the writings of Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and others. But in an inscription of the year 404, the 26th of June is called the

or of married life.

O.H., 4636.

I.C., i. p. lxxxiv.
L.M., v. 6.

O.H., 4716.

R.S., iii. xviii.
29, 39; xx. 40.

I.C., i. No. 529. Lord's Day, *dies Dominica*, and it can be proved by calculation that this fell in that year on Sunday.

Doubtless the profound student will find many more particulars in the inscriptions of this gallery which claim his attention, and even any educated man may feel his curiosity aroused by peculiarities of which he would desire an explanation. We cannot pretend, however, to enumerate them all. It must suffice to have noticed those which seem to us the most important or of the most frequent recurrence; and we trust that, with the assistance we offer, any intelligent visitor to the Lateran Museum will find there not a mere collection of stones, but a well-ordered book, open and easy to be understood by all who have a moderate knowledge of ancient times and the art of interpreting monuments. It remains, however, that we should give a few words of explanation as to the general principle of their arrangement.

General
arrangement
of the inscrip-
tions.

Columns
I.-III.

Public sacred
inscriptions.

All the rest
epitaphs.

The inscriptions are arranged in the walls of the open portico which runs round three sides of the first quadrangle of the palace on the first floor. The series begins with three columns of what De Rossi calls *sacred* inscriptions *par excellence*, because they were not primarily memorials of private individuals, as common epitaphs are, but they were either public monuments of the Christian religion, or they were inscriptions set up to the honour of individual martyrs. All these, from the necessity of the case, are of a comparatively late date; that is, they do not begin till the age of Constantine, and the *elogia* of the martyrs were the composition of Pope Damasus in the latter half of the fourth century. But all the other inscriptions collected here are epitaphs, and they are divided into three classes—the first and last chronological and topographical, the intermediate one arranged according to their contents. This class, by far the most numerous and the most interesting, ought not to be examined till after the others, as they can be made to furnish a sort of introduction to it,

supplying useful standards of comparison, and several important tests, both chronological and historical.

Of the first class, which fills Columns IV.-VII., we do not think it necessary to give any specimens. There are about 130 of them, out of the 1500 of the same class which either still exist or are known from authentic records to have existed; and their value consists in this, that they all bear the names of the Consuls or some other mark of time, which fixes their date. The whole class, of which they are a sample, occupies, as we have seen, the first volume of De Rossi's great work, which is intended to comprise all the Christian inscriptions of the first six centuries; and a study of that work is indispensable to those of our readers who desire to go deeply into the subject.

The earliest inscription in the volume and in the gallery belongs to the third year of Vespasian, or A.D. 71. Unhappily, it is a mere fragment that has survived, containing nothing more than the date. The second is of the year 238. It is written in Greek, and is interesting chiefly because of the unusual detail which is recorded of the number of days during which the deceased was ill; ¹ the epithet also by which he is characterised, *θειοφιλότατος*, or most beloved of God, is not so frequently met with as some others; and the overflowing tenderness of the bereaved father leads him to say of his child that he was "sweeter to him than light and life itself." The third, A.D. 273, is engraved on the lid of a sarcophagus, and was found in the cemetery of Prætextatus. It consists of a single name and the date of the death.

But it would take us too long to go through them all in detail; neither would the fruit of such an examination be at all in proportion to its labour. We shall confine ourselves therefore to the mention of a few particulars that are either specially interesting in themselves, or promise to be specially useful when we come to speak of the great mass of inscriptions

¹ Some persons understand the same detail to be recorded in an inscription of the year 370, No. 214 in De Rossi's volume.

that are undated ; and we will take them indifferently from the Lateran Gallery or from De Rossi's printed volume, only taking care to specify the dates of the epitaphs to which we are indebted for them.

Characteristics of the more ancient symbols ;

First, then, we observe the very ancient symbols of the fish and the anchor only on an epitaph of the year 234 : the bird, with or without the olive branch, very frequently, especially in the latter half of the fourth century ; there are ten or twelve examples between 346 and 408 : the *orante* also, or figure of the deceased holding out his arms in prayer, appears during the same period, A.D. 375, 382, 403, and 409. The earliest exam-

ple on these monuments of the monogram  is in the year

331 ; it is engraved with the prefatory words *In signo* between two palm branches, after the age of the deceased and before the names of the Consuls. The addition of Alpha and Omega on either side of it are on stones of the years 362, 367, and 371. B.M. is found at the beginning of inscriptions in 336, 346, and 350, whilst in one of 343 the words stand at full length—*Bonæ Memoriae*.

phrases.

The dead are spoken of as asleep in epitaphs of all ages—*e.g.*, 249, 311, 397 ; but the grave is spoken of as though it were man's last and eternal home (*domus æterna*) in inscriptions which are comparatively late, A.D. 356, 363 and 407. The phrase *In pace* appears in an epitaph A.D. 290 ; and after the middle of the next century is rarely absent ; sometimes standing alone, sometimes coupled with the word used to denote the death or burial, or with the verb *quiescit*. The prayer "Mayest thou live among the saints" is found on an epitaph of A.D. 268 (or 279) ; and "Mayest thou be refreshed with the holy souls," in the year 291 ; and in the year 307, "Sweet soul, drink and live ;" which is common enough on drinking cups, but is rarely found in epitaphs. After the conversion of Constantine there is no instance of these simple and affectionate prayers for the deceased. Once only, A.D. 380, we find a petition to the

deceased that she will pray for the child she has left behind her.

The post-Constantinian inscriptions are for the most part purely historical or biographical in their substance. They record the length of life ; probably also there is another record of the length of time during which the husband and wife lived together ; sometimes also mention is made of the civil or ecclesiastical position of the deceased ; and, finally, the day of death or of burial. In the case of wives and children, laudatory epithets, sometimes of an extravagant kind, are added from the middle of the fourth century. Wives are praised as of marvellous goodness and holiness, marvellous industry and goodness, marvellous integrity and prudence, of rare example, &c. ; and children, even of four or five years of age, "of wonderful innocence and wisdom ;" and one lady, named Rufina, aged twenty-one, is spoken of as though she were the very personification of all that was perfect, A.D. 381—" *Infantia ætas, virginitatis integritas, morum grabitas, fidei et reverentia disciplina hic sita Rufina jacet ætat. xxi.*" Lastly, there are two or three epitaphs where the praise is of a more distinctive character, or is expressed in a more striking way ; as when the deceased is called "a lover of the poor," A.D. 341 and 377, or "friendly to all," A.D. 385 ; or where it is said of a wife that her industry and thriftiness (*conservantia*) could hardly be found in any one else, A.D. 379 ; or of a child who died before he was eighteen months old, A.D. 382 (whose panegyric was not probably due to the same author as the preceding), that he was innocent and "*innocentium misericors* ;" and then the father is made to indulge in the following outburst of his feelings, which sounds rather rhetorical than real—"Who has not lamented and poured forth affectionate tears for your age ? My future hope was looked for in thee ; by thee, by thee, O Celerinus, I looked for everlasting glory. Thou restest in peace." This is one of the very rare instances in which these ancient epitaphs indulge in any long expression of sentiment ; and the reader

Characteristics of those after Constantine.

will observe that it was towards the latest period of the use of the Catacombs as places of burial. Those of Marius and Alexander, which are printed in some books as belonging to the ages of persecution, and in which the deceased are represented as lamenting over the hardness of the times in which they live, are not genuine.

XVIII.-
XXIV. Topo-
graphical.

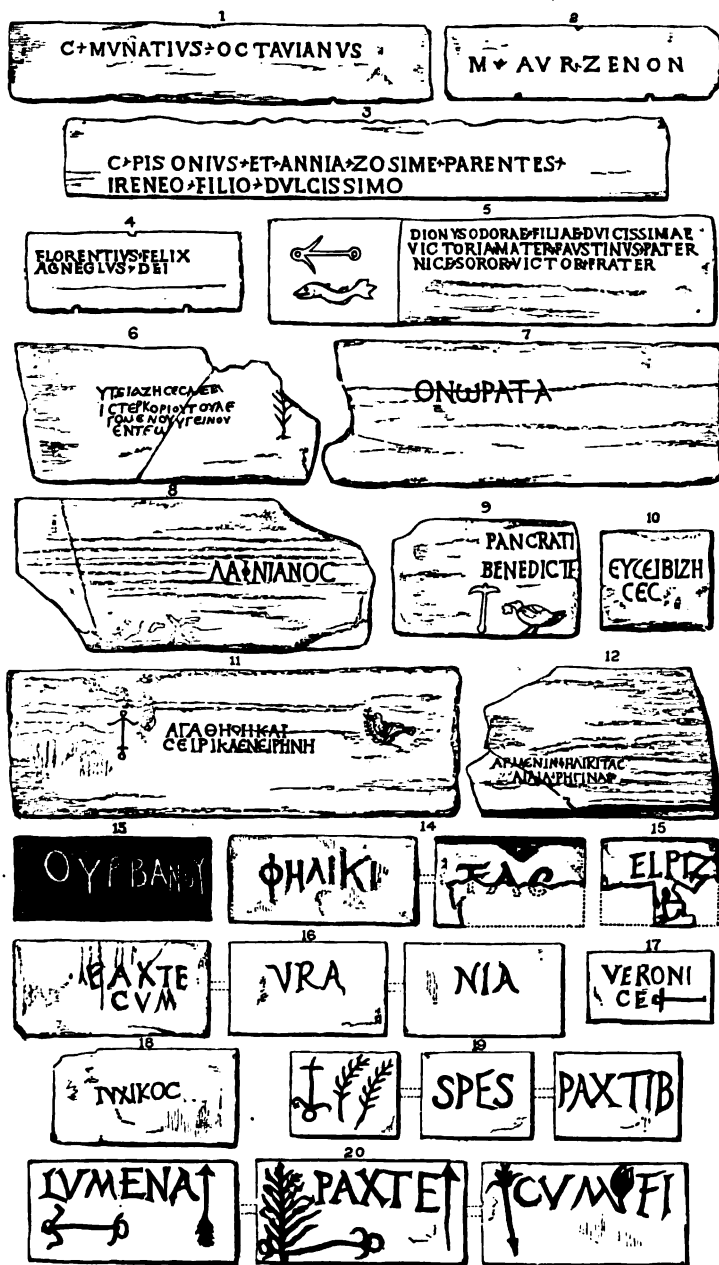
We shall have occasion to return to some of these again in a future chapter. At present we will pass on to Columns XVIII.-XXIV., of which we said that the inscriptions are

XXI.-XXIV.
not from the
Roman Cata-
combs.

arranged topographically. Of these, some lie outside our subject, e.g., Column XXI., on the score of place, because they come from Ostia; but we shall call our readers' attention to certain interesting peculiarities to be observed in these in a future chapter. The inscriptions in Column XXII. were discovered in 1842, in the cemetery near St. Peter's, of which Pope Damasus speaks in his verses on the Baptistery of that Basilica; but this cemetery was not subterranean. In like manner the inscriptions in Column XXIII. do not come from the Catacomb of Cyriaca, but from the cemetery which was made above that Catacomb; and those in Column XXIV. come from the sepulchres of the Basilica* of St. Pancrazio, and are of the sixth century. There remain in this topographical division three columns, XVIII.-XX., all of which concern us much, as they contain samples of particular classes of inscriptions which are assigned to the most ancient dates. We have given on the next page a small selection from them.

The reader will see at a glance that not all belong to the same family. One feature they have in common—the absence of any but the most ancient emblems, the dove, the fish, the anchor and the palm branch; but there is a marked difference between the engraving of those at the top of the page and those at the bottom. In fact, these last, 13-20, are not really engraved at all, but merely painted with red paint on the slabs of terra-cotta with which the graves in this part of the Catacomb of St. Priscilla are closed; and the three slabs of the last speci-

XVIII. of
single names
only; painted,
not engraved;
from St.
Priscilla.



men were attached to the grave in wrong order. They should have stood, of course, PAX TECUM FILUMENA, as in 16, PAX TECUM URANIA, a phrase which is slightly altered in 19 to PAX TIBI; but the rest from this catacomb simply give the name of the deceased, either without any addition whatever, or with the addition only of the Christian emblem of hope, the anchor. This is on the epitaph of one whose name was Hope, *Elpis*; and there is a flavour of Christianity about the other names also in this category, Philumena, or Beloved; Felicitas, or Happiness; Urania, or Heavenly. Fortunata and Victorina also are among the rest which are to be seen in this column at the Lateran.

XX. quite in classical style, from Cæmeterium Ostri-anum.

Those at the top of our page of illustrations (1-5) will attract attention from the beauty and boldness of their lettering, and the same characteristic belongs to all the forty which fill this column. They come from the Cæmeterium Ostri-anum, which, in former years, was wont to be called the Catacomb of St. Agnes on the Via Nomentana, but which is in reality very much older than that saint, being the place in which, according to the Roman tradition, St. Peter himself baptized. We see here the three Roman names, or the two, according to classical usage; and the names themselves, and the forms of expression, are classical. On two of the specimens which we have selected the epithet given to the deceased is *dulcissimus*; on the column itself this epithet occurs a dozen times, and hardly any other; only *αἰμωρότος* once, and *innocens* once, both of which are, of course, to be found also on Pagan epitaphs. Tokens of Christianity, however, are not wanting. In our own selection one of the deceased is called "The little lamb of God;" to another are added the emblems of the fish and the anchor; and amongst those which our space would not allow us to copy are three or four more anchors, a dove, *In pace* half a dozen times, and once *Vivas in Deo*.

XIX. all Greek, from Prætextatus.

The middle of our page is taken up with seven epitaphs (6-12), which, with a single exception, are all Greek. They are a selection from Column XIX. of the Lateran, in which

eight inscriptions may be seen in Latin as against twenty-one in Greek. They come from the most ancient part of the Cemetery of Prætextatus, and bear every mark of antiquity. The fish is found on one of them, the palm branch on another, the anchor on three, and the dove on four. Two names occur on several. The pious acclamation ZHCEC, "Mayest thou live," is the only addition made to the name in No. 10; the same occurs also in No. 6, to which is appended another acclamation at the end, "In God." "In peace" is written in its Greek form on No. 11. In the same epitaph the lady is described by two names, not as though they both belonged to her by the same legal right, as being her *nomen* and *prænomen*, but rather as though one were a familiar substitute for the other; "Agatha, who is also called Sirica." The same peculiarity may be observed in No. 6, "Hygeia, mayest thou live, with Stercorius who is also called Hyginus, in God." It was Bull., 1866, p. 69. common among all classes of Roman society in the second and third centuries to have two personal names (*cognomina diacritica*), names arising partly from a popular origin or private usage in the family, partly from a real double cognomen of civil and legitimate use. They are generally coupled together by the formula *qui* (or *quæ*) *et*, and it is usual to put first the nickname or *sobriquet* (so to call it), the *signum* or *vocabulum*, as the Romans called it, and the true cognomen in the second L.B., i. 75. place; but this order was sometimes reversed.

The contrast between the inscriptions in these three columns and those which bear their own dates in Columns IV.–VII. is too marked to escape the notice even of the most superficial observer. "It is easy to understand," says De Rossi, "even Bull., 1877. *à priori* by the mere light of reason, how, from these special families of inscriptions, when studied collectively in groups, and examined in connection with the history of the places where they came, and their mutual relations both of resemblance and difference, their chronology stands forth clear and certain; not, of course, the precise years to which they severally belong,

but at least the period." And so the two series of selected epitaphs which occupy the two lateral wings of the portico, the one arranged chronologically, the other topographically, when taken together, put into the hand of the student a most valuable clue whereby to distinguish the different ages of Christian epigraphy. And this distinction is essential to the right appreciation of the epitaphs which occupy the intervening columns (VIII.-XVI.); it is, in fact, the very basis of the science of Christian archæology. We must treat of it, therefore, at some length in a separate chapter.

CHAPTER III.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE INSCRIPTIONS.

Proportions of dated and undated inscriptions of first six centuries—Their chronological distribution—Present book confined to first four centuries—Dated inscriptions extraordinarily rare during this period—Mode of distinguishing undated inscriptions—Two great classes of Christian epitaphs known by certain tokens—In the most ancient no note of length of life or day of death, but ancient symbols, Greek language, short pious acclamations, special phrases—In the later class, laudatory epithets of deceased; other special phrases; monograms, crosses, &c.—Reasons of this difference—Its reality proved by examples—Another point of difference in names—Occasional exceptions—Other differences determined by geographical, not chronological, limits—Examples—Important results obtained by observing these distinctions.

IT has been mentioned that about fifteen thousand Christian inscriptions are known belonging to the first six centuries, and that about fifteen hundred of these are marked by dates which determine their chronology. It is to be observed, however, that these dated inscriptions are most unequally distributed in point of time. There is but one of the first century, two of the second, twenty-three or twenty-four of the third, five hundred (more or less) both of the fourth and of the fifth, and the remainder belong to the sixth. Thus nearly three-fourths of the dated inscriptions lie outside the scope of our present purpose, which is confined to the Christian epitaphs of the Catacombs, or at least of the period during which the Catacombs continued to be used for purposes of burial, *i.e.*, to the year A.D. 410.

Unequal distribution of dated inscriptions during first six centuries.

Very rare in first four.

For fifty or sixty years before that time, cemeteries of the ordinary kind had been made in Rome, that is to say, above ground; especially above the Catacombs and round the small

Basilicas which were connected with them. And during the changes and chances of more than a thousand years, some of the tombstones belonging to these upper cemeteries may have fallen through the *luminaria* into the lower. It is generally easy to distinguish the one set of inscriptions from the other by their different shape, size and bulk. But these differences do not concern us now. We propose to give an account of Christian epigraphy in Rome during the first four centuries, so far as it can be ascertained from both sources indifferently ; and to help us to arrange them chronologically, we make our first appeal to those that bear their own dates on the face of them. Of these, we have less than thirty before the age of Constantine, barely ten of the reign of that Emperor, about seventy belonging to the reigns of his sons, a dozen or more of the reign of Julian, and not far short of three hundred belonging to the years which elapsed between the death of Julian and the capture of Rome by Alaric.

We next turn to the great bulk of the un-dated inscriptions, and ask to what epoch these ought to be referred. Are these also, like those with dates, to be divided mainly between the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, and only an insignificant fraction assigned to the earlier ages? or was the practice of adding the dates a fashion of late introduction?

Undated inscriptions very numerous, and generally ancient.

We know that it was the habit of the ancient Christians, as of the Pagans also, to mark the anniversaries of their departed friends by certain religious ceremonies ; but at first they kept note of these days in their own private records, they did not inscribe them on the tombstones. Not only single inscriptions, but whole groups or families of inscriptions, which have been found under De Rossi's own eyes in parts of the Catacombs which he knows to have been most ancient, are uniformly without any such information. Those of the third century, he says, make more frequent mention of the day and month of the death (or burial), but even these, too, very rarely add the year ; and the complete chronological formula, including the

day, month, and year, becomes more and more common as we advance into the fourth century. If this be true, it follows that the great bulk of the Christian inscriptions of Rome are very ancient indeed ; and it becomes a matter of the highest importance to find means of establishing, at least approximately, their date. How is this to be done ?

The same problem often meets the student of Pagan monuments, and this is the way in which it is dealt with by Mommsen, who is generally admitted to be the most eminent authority on the subject. He says that as long as an inscription has to do with public events, it is manifestly possible in some degree to define its age, *e.g.*, it will rarely be difficult to distinguish a monument of the Republic from one of the Imperial period. But with private monuments, the case is different ; only a few of these are dated, and their subject-matter is (generally) equally suitable to all ages. A genuine student, then, he says, will proceed in this way. He will first arrange all his examples before him, carefully eliminating all doubtful, corrupt, or false ones. He will then select those which have an epoch in any way defined, and from the certain will proceed to make out with some probability the age of the uncertain. He will mark all peculiarities of words or of spelling, *e.g.*, when certain phrases, at first confined to verse, came to be admitted into prose ; when *ai* ceased to be written for *i*, *oe* for *u*, *quom* for *cum*, &c. By the time this collection and comparison of dated examples has been made, it will be found that many questions are solved. To attempt to solve them in any other way is to cut the knot with a leaden sword, a process which brings with it its own Nemesis for the blind impatience which prompted it.

C.I.L., i. 204.

How to give the age of undated inscriptions.

Mommsen's method.

De Rossi has followed precisely the course marked out by the great German critic ; and those who have studied the volume he has published will often have had occasion to admire the patience and ingenuity with which his labours have been conducted, and the unexpectedly fruitful results by which they have been sometimes rewarded. But he has also derived

very valuable assistance, which is rarely within the reach of the collector of Pagan inscriptions, from a knowledge of the places where his monuments have been found. For by long observation his judgment as to the chronological order of development in the construction of the Catacombs has become extraordinarily sure and certain. We have ourselves known him correct, solely on this ground, the report of a date that was brought him by one who had seen the stone on which it was inscribed (in fact, who had helped to recover it from the *débris* under which it lay buried) in one of the galleries in the Cemetery of Prætextatus. De Rossi himself had not seen the stone, but he had formed his estimate of the date of that part of the Catacomb in which it was said to have been found ; and he declared that the Consuls named to him belonged to a different period ; his informant, therefore, must have either misread the names or misstated the site ; and on proceeding to examine the inscription on the spot next morning, De Rossi proved to be right.

Moreover, it must not be forgotten, as a recent writer on history has well pointed out,¹ “that the great value of special training in any field of knowledge is to enable the inquirer to appreciate evidence inappreciable by mere common sense.”

On every account, therefore, we have no hesitation in accepting De Rossi's assurance “that there are many tokens, such as the number and character of the names or of the symbols employed, the style of diction, the form of the letters, &c., which, if carefully examined and compared with one another, enable us not unfrequently to make a very probable statement as to the age of un-dated inscriptions (*probabili non raro sententiâ definies*) ; and that if, in addition to this, we know the place where the inscription was found, and have had the opportunity of examining other inscriptions from the same neighbourhood, it will rarely happen that there is any doubt at all about the age to which it belongs.” It is not, of course, meant that it is possible to fix the year, or even the decade or score

¹ Mahaffy's Prolegomena to Ancient History, p. 76.

of years, perhaps ; but De Rossi would certainly fix its chronology within the limits of half or quarter of a century (*tum de ætate late saltem sumptâ vix unquam grave dubium supererit*) ; he would never be in doubt with reference to any particular inscription, still less with reference to a whole class of inscriptions, whether it belonged to the ages of persecution or to the end of the fourth century.¹

“ There are two kinds of Christian inscriptions, very different from one another in diction and style. The main characteristic of the first is purity and simplicity ; often the bare names and nothing else ; no mention either of the age of the deceased, or of the day of his death, or of the person who set up the inscription. Often, however, symbols of various kinds, and especially those which had a secret Christian meaning, are added to inscriptions of this class, which are to be met with very abundantly in the most ancient parts of the Catacombs. The use of the Greek alphabet also is so frequent upon them that the Greek inscriptions sometimes equal, or even surpass, in number those which are written in Latin. Among epitaphs of this class others are very frequently mixed which exhibit, in addition to the names, short Greek or Latin acclamations, of great elegance, and with a savour of ancient simplicity about them, such as *Vivas in Deo, in Christo, in Domino, in pace, cum sanctis*, and the like ; *Pete pro nobis, pro parentibus, pro conjuge, pro filiis, pro sorore ; refrigera, in refrigerio, spiritum tuum Deus refrigeret, Deus tibi refrigeret*, and others of the same kind. Another particular worth mentioning about these ancient *formulae* is that the souls of the deceased are not unfrequently called *spiritus sancti*.²

Two classes of Christian epitaphs.

In the most ancient no dates, but secret symbols.

Greek language.

Pious acclamations.

“ There are some few epitaphs, however, which record the age of the deceased, the day of the death or burial (*depositio*), some

Special phrases.

¹ The importance of the subject must be our apology for continuing our quotation from De Rossi at some length, only occasionally abridging some of his arguments.

² Not a single instance of this occurs in the dated inscriptions after Constantine.

short praise of the deceased, and the names of those who put up the monument, and yet retain the phrases and sobriety, often even the elegance, of the old style. If I add that the writing and the diction of this early class of epitaphs often sins not only against elegance, but even against the laws of grammar, it will easily be understood that this must not be set down to the barbarism of the age, but to the unlettered condition of those who dictated them, and the genius of the vernacular language and pronunciation.

In the latter class, date of death or burials.

“The other kind of Christian inscriptions is as different as possible from the ancient simplicity, and all that savours of the vernacular. The families of inscriptions which belong to this class hardly ever omit to mention the length of the deceased’s life, the day of his death, and especially of his burial, and all other particulars that are wont to belong to sepulchral inscriptions; and express these things by phrases and a certain arrangement of words very different from the old style. They often begin with praises of the deceased, and this in bombastic and extravagant terms, *miræ sapientiæ, innocentia, sanctitatis*; also they continually denote the condition in life of the deceased, a thing which is very rarely indeed recorded in epitaphs of the older class. In some families of the later class of inscriptions, every specimen begins with such phrases as *hic requiescit in pace, hic quiescit, hic jacet, hic positus est*, which are almost always absent from inscriptions of the former kind. Lastly, almost every vestige is obliterated of those ancient acclamations which I have mentioned, and instead of them we have certain affected sentiments, expressed in cumbrous rhetorical form, almost worthy of the Iron Age. As to symbols, and especially such as conceal a hidden meaning, they are rarely to be met with; but in their place we have frequent representations of the monogram of Constantine, of the cross, and other signs of the Church’s triumph. This class of inscriptions is specially dominant in the cemeteries that were made in the open air; it is more rarely found in the subterranean

Laudatory epithets.

Special phrases.

Monograms, crosses, &c.

cemeteries or Catacombs, and only in those parts of them which are manifestly of most recent date.

“Everybody will at once understand from these tokens, that the style of epigraphy which characterises one of these classes of inscriptions belonged to the times when the Church was suffering persecution, and the other was the natural result of the peace and security which she afterwards enjoyed. For, as long as the Christian religion was proscribed by the Roman laws, and those who embraced it were liable to more or less bitter persecution, burying their dead deep in the bowels of the earth, and inscribing titles upon them which were never to see the light of day, they had scarcely any thought of handing down to posterity the memory either of men or of events. It was not for this purpose that they wrote epitaphs, but rather that they might satisfy their own sorrow and affection, and that, amid so many thousands of graves, each one might recognise that which was specially dear to him. For this reason it often happened that they did not even hand them over to professional hands for execution, but wrote them themselves either on the gravestone or on the mortar that secured it in its place. This accounts for their simplicity, for those touching phrases and acclamations so full of love and piety. When peace was given to the Church, and the triumph of the Christian faith was daily more and more secured, the opposite causes came into play; the style of epigraphy was necessarily changed; epitaphs began to be made either as private or public memorials, and in process of time, therefore, were marked with the date of the year.

“How complete a revolution was thereby wrought in the form and substance of Christian epitaphs, and how rapidly the old and beautiful style of acclamations fell into disuse, may be judged by an examination of all the inscriptions which are marked with dates, &c., published in this volume. Of these, there are about 1340 subsequent to the conversion of Constantine; and not one of them contains a single specimen of such acclamations, scarcely anything which even puts us in mind of

Reasons of this difference.

Reality of this difference proved by examples.

them. The only exceptions are the epitaph of Junius Bassus, of whom it is said that he went to God (*ivit ad Deum*), A.D. 359; of two children who died A.D. 431, of one of whom it is said that he "lived to God" fourteen years, and of the other that he was *petitus in pace* on the 11th of April; and of a lady who died on the 10th of June in the following year, and who is said to have been "received by God" (*accepta apud Deum*) on that day. Not one of the words *vivas*, *pete*, or *refrigera* occurs in any one of them; only once we find, on a fragment of an epitaph of unusual length belonging to the fifth century, the words *refrigeretur anima*. On the other hand, among thirty dated inscriptions prior to the conversion of Constantine, we have *receptus ad Deum*, A.D. 217; *vivas inter sanctos*, A.D. 268 (or 279); *filia carissimæ et spiritui sancto tuo*, A.D. 269; *refrigera cum spiritibus sanctis*, A.D. 291; *dulcis anima pie zeses*, A.D. 307; and *arcessitus ab angelis*, A.D. 310.

"Thus, then, whilst the very few inscriptions prior to Constantine which bear a consular date furnish us with striking examples of the characteristics of the more ancient style of Christian epigraphy, the far more numerous body of dated inscriptions of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries plainly unfold to us the rise and progress of the later style. The difference between them is specially to be noticed in the beginning of the epitaphs. A little before the middle of the fourth century we not unfrequently meet with those foolish phrases which, as time went on, became more and more in vogue, predicating of the deceased wonderful goodness and holiness, wonderful industry and prudence, wonderful innocence and wisdom, &c. Towards the end of that century and the beginning of the fifth there creep in those prosaic phrases, "Here lies," "Here rests," "Here is buried," which, after the middle of the fifth century and in the beginning of the sixth, were almost universal.

Another point
of difference.

"This statement of facts, brief and incomplete as it is, will suffice to show what clear and certain marks there are whereby

we may judge concerning any undated inscription, whether it ought to be referred to the age before Constantine or after him ; and if the subject were pursued further into more minute details as to the use of particular signs, words, and phrases, the certainty of our conclusions would be made even more manifest and perfectly demonstrated. Only one such particular shall be mentioned here, but it is one of universal application—to wit, the use of names ; for every epitaph, however short, records at least as much as this ; and this is often sufficient Number to tell us something about the age to which it belongs.

“There is not a single dated Christian inscription after the third century in which all the three names are recorded in the ancient Roman fashion, and even the mention of two names becomes more and more rare after that date.¹ On the other hand, among the twenty-three dated inscriptions of the earlier period in which the names have been preserved, we have one instance of three names, and no less than fourteen of two.

“Then, again, there is a difference even in the names themselves. In the course of the fourth century, the names of the old Roman *gentes* gradually died away, and are hardly to be found at all on Christian epitaphs of a later date. The *cognomina* also are different ; new *cognomina* are found, with a marked predilection for adjectival terminations in *entius*, *antius*, *ontius*, and *osus*, as Vincentius, Amantius, Leontius, Bonosus. Not a few also are gradually admitted which are manifestly derived from the doctrines or history of the Christian faith, or from some of its words and *formulae* ; such as Deusdedit, Adeodatus, Quodvult Deus, Anastasius, Paschasius, Martyrius, Peter, John, Thomas, Renatus, Redemptus, Refrigerius, &c. ; others also perhaps from the humility of Christians and the low esteem in which they held themselves, as Stercorius, Projectus, Contumeliosus.”

and character
of names.

It is not, of course, meant to affirm that a hard and fast line

¹ An exception must be made for the name Flavius, which in the fifth and sixth centuries was in very common use as a kind of *prænomen*, and was written FL.

Occasional
exceptions.

can be drawn in this matter, on neither side of which will ever be found names which we have attributed to the other side, but only that this distinction of names is most certainly, on the whole, a characteristic of different periods, so that in any large collection of epitaphs it is possible by means of it to make a very prudent conjecture as to the age to which they should be referred. And so also about the various acclamations of which we spoke first ; it is not meant that they were utterly and immediately abandoned as soon as the famous Edict of Milan was published, but only that they were gradually superseded by phrases of another kind, suggested by the altered circumstances of the time ; and, in like manner, it might happen that the language of a later period was, as it were, anticipated and used before its time in individual instances and under peculiar circumstances.

Inscriptions also that are written in verse, or quasi-verse, are likely to present many exceptions to the general rules of prose epitaphs of the same period. Epitaphs of this kind were never common in the Catacombs ; there was no space for them on the gravestones, even if there had been a disposition to write them ; and they are especially rare in the earliest ages. There is one example, however, written between the years 296 and 303, which is on every account sufficiently remarkable to be transcribed. The original may still be seen in its place in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus.¹ It runs thus :—

“The Deacon Severus made this double *cubiculum*, with its *arcisolia* and *luminare*, by order [or permission] of his Pope, Marcellinus, as a quiet abode in peace for himself and his family, to the end that it may preserve their sweet limbs in sleep through a long period of time for their Maker and Judge. Severa, sweet both to her parents and to her servants, a virgin, gave up [her life] on the 25th of January, whom the Lord with wonderful wisdom and skill ² had ordered to be born

¹ See plate IX. in the new edition of our “*Roma Sotterranea*.”

² This line in the original stands thus :—

QUAM DOMINUS NASCI MIRA SAPIENTIA ET ARTE JUSSEKAT.

It is evidently borrowed from the *Carmen adversus Marcionem*, usually printed with the works of Tertullian, where we read (lib. i. v. 228) :—

“Quam Dominus mira sapientia fecit et arte.”

in the flesh, whose body is buried here at rest in peace, until it shall rise again by means of Him who took away her soul [rendered] chaste, modest, and ever inviolate by His Holy Spirit, and which the Lord will give back again with spiritual glory. She lived nine years and eleven months and fifteen days besides. Thus was she translated from the world."

We will add yet one more general remark, for which we are indebted to De Rossi, and which the student of Christian epigraphy will often find of service in enabling him to appreciate aright some of the specimens which come before him.

He says that Christian inscriptions of most distant and similar parts of the world are clearly marked by a character of wonderful unity, combined with no less striking variety; whilst there is a substantial uniformity and absolute agreement in their general tone and sense and character, yet there is, at the same time, a certain preference given to one form before another in certain localities. There are various families, so to speak, of epigraphic monuments, and each formula has its geographical as well as its chronological limits, so that it is often possible to define with tolerable certainty both the age and country to which a particular epitaph belongs by the mere study of its words and style; *e.g.*, the laudatory phrase *Bonæ memoriæ* seems to have been unknown in Rome when it was in continual use in certain parts of the provinces; *e.g.*, in Gaul. An expression of resignation to the will of God, or at least an assertion of His providence, in the statement that the deceased had ended (or would end) his term of days when God willed it (or should will it), is found in a score of epitaphs from the ancient Cemetery of Ostia, whereas it is wholly absent from those in the Cemetery of Porto on the other side of the river. The same may be said of the word *dormit*, which is rarely used in Porto, and as rarely omitted in Ostia; whilst just the reverse of this is true of the phrase *Vivas in Deo, Domino* or

Geographical as well as chronological differences.

Examples.
L.B., ii. 153.

Bull., 1866, p. 41.
1869, p. 48.

Christo. This phrase is sometimes exchanged in Porto for another, ΕΝ ΚΩ ΧΑΙΠΕΙΝ, bidding the dead rejoice in the Lord, *i.e.*, auguring for them full and perfect happiness in eternal life, in a form of which I do not know any examples elsewhere. In like manner, if the Christians of Capua always used the language of faith and wrote of their dead *Hic requiescit in somno pacis*, those of Beneventum were content with a terminology less distinctively Christian, and wrote *Hic situs est*.

J.R.N., i. pp.
65, 130.

Importance
of observing
these differ-
ences.

It would seem, then, that just as each country is apt to give some slight peculiarity to the style of architecture which it adopts, and which is common to many other countries, as each mint has its own style in reproducing even the same coins, so the Churches of different periods or different localities set their own stamp on the general forms of Christian epigraphy; and an attentive observation of these will often throw light on the history of Christian doctrine in different places, or enable us to restore an epigraph to its proper home, or to make trustworthy supplements to imperfect texts.

In pace.

It is observed by De Rossi, for example, that the phrase *In pace*, occurring so many thousands of times on Roman epitaphs, is yet hardly ever found on any of them in connection with the word *vixit*, whereas in Lyons it is found in this connection on eight stones out of the twenty which have come down to us, and very frequently indeed on Christian epitaphs in Africa. Now the Church in both those countries was much troubled by the Arian and other heresies, whence we easily comprehend why the survivors should have been anxious to declare about their deceased relatives that he or she had kept the faith, had enjoyed that *pax* of which St. Cyprian and other Fathers speak so much—the *pax ecclesiæ*, or communion with the Catholic Church. But in Rome there was not the same necessity for such a record; the words *in pace* were applied rather to the state of the soul after death than to the past condition of the living; and perhaps the very few Roman epitaphs (only eleven) in which the words are connected with life were the

epitaphs of foreigners using the fashion of their own country. On actual examination, it appears that two out of the eleven are distinctly set down as strangers (one is a Spaniard, the other *peregrinus*); the name Freda is sufficient to convict a third; in a fourth, Latin words are written in Greek letters;¹ and in two or three more the false spelling gives indications of familiarity with a foreign rather than a native pronunciation.

In like manner, M. le Blant has called attention to the remarkable fact that among all the ancient Christian inscriptions of France only those of a particular province make special mention of "the hope of the future resurrection;" and justly arguing that this cannot be the result of accident or of the mere caprice of individuals, he recognises in it a special protest against one of the heresies of the Gnostics, introduced into the country contemporaneously with Christianity itself, and laboriously refuted by St. Irenæus. An outspoken confession of faith in the resurrection of the body is fitly engraved on the tombstones of Vienne and other places in the Valley of the Rhone by the descendants of those who had had St. Irenæus for their Bishop, and who had written to their Eastern brethren so beautiful an account of the passion of their martyrs, and of the efforts made by their Pagan persecutors to destroy all trace of their remains, "to the end that they might triumph over Christ Himself, rendering impossible the regeneration of the bodies, and destroying all hope, as they said, of the resurrection."²

The same writer, in illustration of the advantages to be gained from the habit of noting all local peculiarities of inscriptions, very pertinently asks what sense we could have made out of such a fragment as this—

ATTI
ΔΙΚΑ

ii. p. 158.
ATTI ΔΙΚΑ.

except we had known that in the Holy Land (where it was found) it was a common practice to inscribe over the gates of towns, "This is the gate of the Lord; the just shall enter into it."

¹ It is printed in page 20.

² Euseb., H. E., v. 1.

ΑΥΤΗ Η ΠΥΛΗ ΤΟΥ ΚΥΡΙΟΥ
ΔΙΚΑΙΟΙ ΕΙΣΕΛΕΥΟΝΤΑΙ ΕΝ ΑΥΤΗ

We will conclude this chapter with an account of the restoration of another epitaph by De Rossi, which, though it was not suggested by his familiarity with the peculiar phraseology of the period, yet certainly received much confirmation from that knowledge. The history will impress upon our readers a more lively conviction of the patient labour, the critical ingenuity, and the scrupulous conscientiousness of the discoverer than could have been derived from any mere summary of results. And as De Rossi is to be our guide throughout the following pages, it is of consequence that we should establish on as firm a basis as possible his claims to our confidence.

Epitaph of
Pope Caius
not found in
Papal crypt.

When writing in an early part of the second volume of his "Roma Sotterranea" on the Papal crypt and the place of burial of each individual Pope in the third century, he came in due course to Caius (A.D. 283-296), but he was obliged to confess that he could say little or nothing of his sepulchre; that the *Liber Pontificalis* says of him that he was buried on the 22d of April in *cæmeterio Callixti*—a phrase which experience had taught him was used specially to designate the Papal crypt in that cemetery; that the oldest calendars, as well as the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* and its followers, assign the same date; but that some other martyrologies have *X. Kal. Maias*, instead of *X. Kal. Martias*, or rather they have both dates; that different explanations had been given of this, but for his own part he thought it evident that some copyist had first made the very easy blunder of writing *Martias* for *Maias*, and then another had inserted both; but he added that it was far more difficult to account for yet a third commemoration assigned to him in some martyrologies on the 1st of July; he would only say that he was not himself satisfied with the explanation suggested by the learned editor of the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, the Bollandists, and others, who had recourse to the theory of some translations of the saint's body at various times, of which no record had reached us.

This was the state of his knowledge on the subject in 1868. In 1875 or 1876, when writing the early part of the third volume he interrupts his narrative to tell us of certain fragments, which he has found near the crypt of St. Eusebius, of a slab of very fine Greek marble, beautifully engraved, with Greek letters of unusual size, and cut more deeply than usual, and the words separated from one another by a very peculiar ornamental figure, which he had seen before on a Christian epitaph of the year 291, and published in his volume on the Christian inscriptions. Fragments of it discovered elsewhere.

“Having hunted,” he says, “with great diligence for every fragment of this slab, however small, and studied attentively how the broken bits should be put together (for unfortunately many of them did not fit into one another), at last I saw, and after much deliberation I was convinced, that they belong to the sepulchre of Pope Caius. When I wrote the second volume, and treated of the Papal crypt, I had not succeeded in putting the fragments together, so I could not make any use of them, though the inscription really illustrates the matter which belongs to that volume. The study of minute fragments, the distinguishing amid so enormous and confused a mass the bits that belong to the same inscription, is an undertaking so long and wearisome, and is often interfered with by so many even material hindrances, that if a conscientious determination to fulfil what has been enjoined me and what I have promised to do in this work did not oblige me, and if the ordinarily moderate fruit which I reap from so much labour were not occasionally multiplied a hundredfold by some unlooked-for discovery, my patience would have failed, and I should not have persevered. Let so much be said by way of apology and explanation why I bring forth to the world to-day so remarkable a monument, when its proper place should have been in the preceding volume; and now, without further preface, let us come to the point.” A.C., i. p. 24.

He then gives all the fragments of the slab on which there

The whole
restored.

are any letters or parts of letters, or any of the ornamental stops we have spoken of. They are the darkly shaded portions of the following diagram :—



Restoration
justified.

The reader will observe that the relative positions of the ΕΠ in the first line, the Τ in the second, and the ΜΑΙ in the third are fixed with certainty by the way in which the three fragments of stone dovetail into one another, and it was the arrangement of these three bits which ultimately gave the key to the whole. In like manner, the relative positions of the Τ in the first line, ΚΑ in the second, and Α in the third, were determined with the same absolute certainty. It remained only to assign their proper places to ΠΡ and to Γ; but even of these it was certain that ΠΡ belonged to the last line, because of the long uninscribed portion of marble below them; and of Γ, that it was the initial letter of a word, because of the point before it. Having thus arranged his fragments, De Rossi proceeds as follows :—

“The arrangement, now that it has been made, is so evidently correct that it will seem strange that I should have been delayed so long and laboured so hard to make it. The epitaph begins with the proper name of the deceased in the genitive case; then follows ΕΠ, which in so noble a monument naturally suggests that he was a Bishop; and then in

the two lower lines the burial (*καταθίσις*, *depositio*) is assigned to some day in the latter half of April; and the deceased man's name began with Γ. Now, of all the Popes and Bishops buried in the Cemetery of Callixtus whose names have been preserved to us by ancient documents, the only one whose name begins with Γ is Caius, who was buried on the 22d of April 296; and it has been already mentioned that the singular stops between the words have been found precisely on an epitaph of about that time (291). Moreover, the abbreviation KAT is found on a whole group of epitaphs belonging to this very place and period. Thus everything conspires to confirm the reading we have suggested, and the supplements we have made to these mutilated fragments of a noble epitaph. A most attentive analysis of the epitaph, and of the beautifully symmetrical form of the letters convinces me that this is not a mere happy play of fancy, not a mere specious probability, but a true and solid reality. It is scarcely credible that it should be an entirely fortuitous and deceitful combination of circumstances, in such wonderful harmony with one another, which recalls to us the memory of Pope Caius."

He then shows, by a still more minute analysis of the arrangement of the letters and stops, that there could only have been two or three letters after ΕΠ, and that the name at the beginning can only have consisted of five or six letters; and so, he says, "the intrinsic and historical reasons which justify his restoration are still further confirmed by extrinsic reasons and material facts." Finally, on the ninth fragment of the stone, which has not yet been mentioned, is found a *graffito* of the name of *Leo*, preceded by a cross, the same as appears on the sepulchre of Cornelius and elsewhere, and which clearly shows that this was no common tomb. In addition to all these arguments, "the very drawing of the epitaph as restored will satisfy, if I am not mistaken, every practised eye and every competent judge that it is no result of ingenious combination, but a happy discovery of the truth."

Another epitaph restored.

P. 260.

Thus wrote De Rossi at p. 115 of the third volume of his *Roma Sotterranea*. A hundred and fifty pages farther on, when all that preceded had been (he tells us) already printed, he has something more to say on the same subject, and it is too intimately connected with the whole argument of this volume for us not to make room for his narrative. He had found in another part of the cemetery sixteen fragments of another large slab, which had evidently served as the *mensa* of an *arcosolium*, and from which he was able to gather that a certain Jovina had bought an *arcosolium* in the Cemetery of Callixtus, near the tomb of some martyr (*Arcosolium in Callisti at Domn...*). This discovery was of great interest and value even in its imperfect state; not only because it speaks of St. Callixtus' (omitting the word cemetery) exactly as it is written in the old calendars which were published by F. Dionysius Filocalus in 354, just when this part of the cemetery was in use, but also because it confirmed with a seal of absolute certainty what De Rossi had already announced as the result of his own personal examination: that this Liberian district (so to call this part of the Catacomb, from the Pope in whose time it was made) had no specific name of its own, but was considered a part of the famous cemetery with which it was connected. But the inscription would have been a hundredfold more interesting and more valuable if it had not been broken off precisely at the middle of the word *Domn*. This was the second time he had been thus cruelly disappointed by the mutilated condition of an inscription which seemed to promise important revelations, and the most diligent search was therefore made for the missing fragments. The search was unsuccessful; so, having resigned himself as best he might, he set to work to make the most of what he had, and read a paper upon it to an academic audience. He has given us some account of this paper, rightly judging that, in the light of later discoveries, it would be both amusing and instructive; teaching, he says, a lesson as to the caution that is necessary in pronouncing judgment in cases of

this kind, and at the same time leading to a most unexpected discovery of the truth.

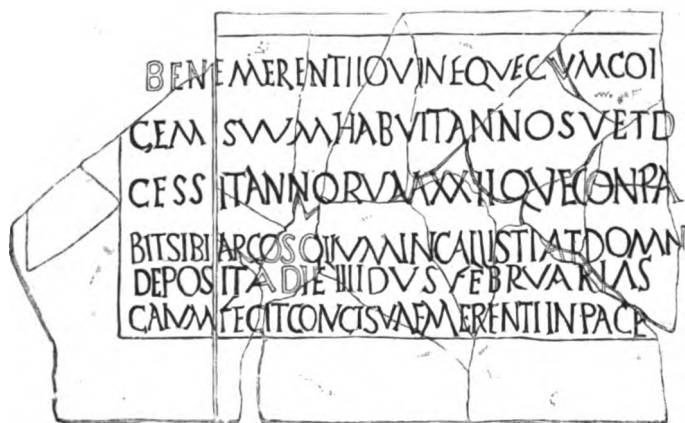
The first line of the inscription began, as he then supposed, with *merenti Jovinae*; and he considered it to be quite perfect on that side, *i.e.*, on the left-hand side as one looks at the stone, so that all his energies were concentrated on an attempt to supply what was wanting on the right-hand side, or at the end of each line. First, he determined that not more than five or six letters could be supplied in any line; and this he judged, first from what he saw of the last two lines, which needed no supplement at all; and secondly, from the supplements which were obviously required in the first three lines to complete the words *cojugem*, *decessit*, and *comparavit*. Unless then the fourth line were prolonged out of all proportion to the others, there was only room here also for very few letters. This being assumed, it would seem to follow that the *ita* at the beginning of the fifth line could not be the ending of the word *deposita* (as would otherwise have been thought certain), but must form part of the missing name of the saint; wherefore he suggested *at Domna(m) Soterita(m)*, the name of the martyr St. Soteris being sometimes found declined in this corrupt form instead of *Soteridem*, and the final *m* being often suppressed in writing in the Catacombs, as it evidently was in familiar conversation. Another adjacent area of this cemetery bears the name of this very martyr, and an example could be found to prove that *ad martyrem* did not always mean an immediate and material contiguity of the two sepulchres, but only a certain general and moral proximity; *e.g.*, a husband and wife were buried in the portico of the Vatican Basilica, yet they described their tomb as *ad Sanctum Petrum Apostolum*, though it was a long way off from the "confession" where the body of the Apostle lay. Finally, he observed as a singular coincidence that the *Natale* of St. Soteris was the very day on which the lady whose epitaph was under consideration is stated to have been buried. What conclusion then could seem more obvious and certain than

that he had hit upon the correct restitution of the missing letters?

De Rossi himself, however, was not well satisfied with his own explanation. All the instances of *ad martyrem* hitherto found in the Catacombs had seemed to denote material contiguity; the example of its use in a wider sense belonged to a later period. Moreover, the inscription seemed imperatively to require *deposita*; it would have been very strange indeed if that word had been omitted, and so the inscription had announced that Jovina had bought the tomb on such a day, but made no mention of the day on which she had occupied it. A learned colleague also called attention to the strange way in which the inscription must have been arranged, the letters touching the very edge of the stone on the left-hand side, whilst yet there must have been a quantity of unoccupied space on the right. Was it possible that the stone had been cut in half, and that they had only half the inscription before them? This led to a more minute inspection of the monument itself; and it was discovered that, in the upper corner of the left-hand side, a bit of mortar, which it had never occurred to them to rub off, covered the letter E. *Merenti* had been a possible word; *emerenti* was impossible. It must certainly have been *benemerenti*, and there must be another section of the stone somewhere. And then it flashed upon De Rossi's memory that he had found a few months before, at some distance from this part of the cemetery, yet in the same quarter, a section of an inscription, containing many letters, which gave no sense whatever. The reader may be sure that no time was lost in bringing the two fragments together, and our diagram on the next page shows the result.

Strange to say, the fragments originally discovered had given the endings of nearly all the lines, so that there was hardly any need of supplements where it had been attempted to make them; the supplements were wanted at the beginning of the lines, where all had been supposed to be perfect; and in most

instances they were precisely what had been suggested. Only the beginning of the last line was new, and made a most unexpected revelation, that the saint whose name had been so eagerly sought for was not St. Soteris, but Caius. The reader will say that the name does not follow the title *Domnum* immediately, a whole line intervenes. But he will also see that, as the inscription was first engraved, the two words did follow each other without any interruption whatever; at first there were only five lines, written at regular intervals; the line which records the date of the burial is a manifest addition, squeezed in between lines four and five, to the complete destruction of the symmetry of the engraving.



BENEMERENTI JOVINE QUE CUM COJU
GEM SUUM HABUIT ANNOS V ET DE
CESSIT ANNORUM XXII QUE CONPARA
BIT SIBI ARCOSOLIUM IN CALLISTI AT DOMNU
DEPOSITA DIE III IDUS FEBRUARIAS
CAIUM FECIT CONJUGI SUÆ MERENTI IN PACE

"To the well-deserving Jovina, who spent five years with her husband, and died at the age of twenty-two years; who bought for herself an arcosolium in St. Callixtus' near St. Gaius. [Her husband] put this up to his deserving wife. In peace. She was buried on the 11th of February."

CHAPTER IV.

PAGAN EPITAPHS.

Necessity of studying Pagan epitaphs—Points of contrast—To Pagans, death was without hope ; an eternal farewell—Yet imaginary exchange of salutations between the living and the dead—Sepulchres—Sententiae sepulchrales on the vanity of life expressed under a variety of images—Different views taken of life ; sensual, practical, trifling, enigmatical, serious—Testimony given by the epitaphs to the state of domestic life in Rome—Strong expressions of natural affection—Parents and children—Impatience at untimely death—Husbands and wives—Some titles of praise or affection perhaps only conventional—Yet the facts recorded are true and very creditable—Domestic virtues praised in women.

Necessity of
studying
Pagan epi-
taphs.

ANOTHER essential requisite in a student of ancient Christian epigraphy is a competent knowledge of the Pagan epigraphy of the same period. Without this knowledge he will certainly fail to recognise many Christian epitaphs when he sees them, and he will probably claim as fruits of Christian teaching certain excellencies of character which can be shown to have resulted also—in some instances at least, and to a certain degree—from the natural virtues of the old Romans. Thus, it may have occurred to some of our readers that there is not much evidence of Christianity in most of the epitaphs recorded in our last chapter ; and yet a slight familiarity with Pagan epitaphs would have at once suggested several important points of difference from their ordinary style.

Points of con-
trast.

De Rossi has remarked, that the most ancient Christian epitaphs differ from those of their Pagan contemporaries, not so much in what they say as in what they do not say. They omit, for example, the customary dedication to the *Di Manes*. They say nothing about having made provision for the burial

of other members of the family, because in most instances each grave can only hold one body, or at most two or three ; they are silent as to the birth and parentage, the country, the profession and social rank of the deceased ; and after the middle of the third century, they rarely record more than one of his names. At first, also, they hardly ever make mention of the relationship between the deceased and the person setting up the *titulus*, a particular which is seldom omitted by the surviving friends or relatives of a deceased Pagan. They contain no appeal to the good feeling or religious superstition of passers-by not to violate or in any way profane the tomb, nor do they utter imprecations against those who do. These marks of difference may be observed even in the briefest inscriptions ; in those which are longer, the contrast between the two classes would naturally be still more visible. In order that we may be able to judge of this, we will first pass in review the leading features of Pagan epitaphs, as they may be gathered from the thousands of examples which have come down to us and been preserved in various collections ; and then in the following chapters we will do the same for the Christian epitaphs.

The first point which strikes us in studying any collection of Pagan epitaphs is the dreary prospect, or rather the utter want of prospect, of anything beyond the grave, which seems to be their chief characteristic. Occasionally an attempt is made to conceal this by apostrophising the shades below and begging them to welcome the deceased, as though into another world ; e.g.,

To the Pagans
death was
without hope
of future life.

OSSA NICENIS HIC SITA SUNT.
SUPERI, VIVITE, VALETE ;
INFERI, HAVETE, RECIPITE NICENEM.¹

The bones of Nicen are buried here.
Ye who live in the upper air, live on, farewell ;
Ye shades below, hail ; receive Nicen.

Or again, a husband addresses his deceased wife, bids her rest well, and asks her, if the shades below have any sense (*si quid*

¹ Pitture e sepolcri scoperti sull' Esquilino nell' 1875. Par Edoardo Brizio, No. 473.

sapiunt), to remember him; "we shall never forget thee."¹ More commonly, however, death is described as a never-ending sleep, and the grave as the last everlasting home; and the deceased, contemplating himself and all that he is and has, says that he leaves behind him an empty name; that his body is dissolved into dust, and his life into the air. Again, the same idea was conveyed in the quiet sadness of that one word *Vale*, or in the more impassioned repetition of it, *Vale, vale, dulcissima; semper in perpetuo vale*—the last long eternal farewell, which is frequently all that is added to the name, age, and relationship of the deceased. In some places, *e.g.*, in Majorca, the favourite formula for expressing this melancholy truth consisted of two words only, *Fuisti; vale*, which may be considered very fairly to express the popular belief upon the subject, whatever faint hopes of a brighter kind may have dawned upon the minds of a few select philosophers.

O.H., 4796.

C.I.L., v. 123, 262.

An eternal farewell.

C.I.L., ii. 3676, 3789, 3690.

Exchange of salutations between the living and the dead on sepulchres.

This mode of taking leave of the dead, indicating the nature of the separation which had now befallen them, and the insuperable barrier which henceforth intervened between them and the living, had at least the merit of being simple and natural. We cannot say the same of another formula, which was frequently united with it, and which imagined an interchange of salutations between the person buried and those who passed by his tomb. These were invited to salute the deceased with an *ave* or *salve*, and the imaginary response stood engraven on the stone ready for all comers. It is even expressly recorded upon some monuments that this was the reason why they were placed near the highways, that the deceased might receive these mock salutations more frequently, *T. Lollius positus propter viam, ut dicant praterientes, Lolli. Ave*.

O.H., 4737.

Sit tibi terra levis.

A third form of salutation which is often given and asked for in the inscriptions is of a somewhat different kind—not unnatural, but inane; we mean the prayer (so to call it) of

¹ *Pitture e sepolcri scoperti sull' Esquilino nell' 1875. Par Edoardo Brizio, No. 182.*

the survivors that the bones of the deceased may rest well, or (much more commonly) that the earth may lie lightly upon him. This same conceit is to be found in some of the Greek epitaphs collected in the "Anthologia Græca," of one of which Merivale has given the following pleasing translation :—

" Hail, Universal Mother ! lightly rest
On that dead form,
Which, when with life invested, ne'er oppressed
Its fellow-worm."

By the Romans it was not so poetically expressed, but it was in more general use. In their burial-places, both at home and abroad, it was so common, that the initials of the words constituting the formula were used almost as frequently as the words themselves. S.T.T.L. may be seen nearly as often at the end of a Pagan epitaph in ancient Rome as R.I.P. at the end of a Christian one in the modern city. And as the words *Sit tibi terra lenis* form half of a pentameter line, other words were often added to make the other half, such as *Dicite qui legitis, Dic rogo qui transis, Te rogo præteriens, Omnes optamus, Ossibus opto tuis*, or the like ; and then these phrases, too, were so frequently repeated, that they in their turn were abridged into mere initials. Promises were held out to induce passers-by to stop and repeat these words—promises of a long life or of a happy death ; they are implored not to grudge the few moments which the repetition would require, or are reminded that the deceased deserved such an attention, because he (or she) was never burdensome to any during life. When the stereotyped form of words was departed from, the result was occasionally grotesque, as when an appeal is made to the gravestone not to press heavily, out of consideration for the tender age of the child that lies beneath it. Sometimes it was travestied, as in a malicious epigram of Martial, the original of which may be found in the Greek Anthology,¹ praying that the earth covering the deceased may be light and soft as sand,

Sometimes
travestied.

¹ Martial, ix. 30 ; Anthol. Græc., xi. 226.

that so the dogs may more readily get at the bones. Outrages of this kind, however, are very rare; for, to the credit of Pagan epitaphs, it must be stated that they are for the most part remarkably free from those exhibitions of ill-nature, misplaced facetiousness, or other forms of bad taste, which are but too commonly found in any collection of epitaphs of our own country.

To these ordinary *formulae*, which may be said to have been common to all Pagan epitaphs in Rome, it was not unusual to add some appropriate sentiment in prose or verse, more commonly the latter. These vary considerably in character, but most of them will fall under one or other of the following heads.

Sententiæ
sepulchrales.

On the disap-
pointments of
life.

First, we find, as might have been expected, in Pagan as well as Christian epitaphs, certain commonplaces about the shortness and uncertainty of life, the inevitable fate of death, the deceitfulness of fortune, the vanity of care, the bitter disappointment of broken hopes, and the unprofitableness of grief. These sentiments are often expressed in forms which, like some English epitaphs, became public property, and were repeated in every graveyard, so to speak. Here is one of the most common:—*Decipimur votis, et tempore fallimur; et mors Deridet curas; anxia vita nihil.* Sometimes they are expressed under images with which all ages seem to have been familiar. Thus life is compared to a journey, or again to a stage on which each man plays his part. “Hallo, here, you weary traveller; however far you may walk, you must come here at last.” A father burying his daughter expresses his thoughts by a very homely simile: “Men fall like apples,” he says, “some when they are young and sour, others when they are mellow and ripe.”

G., 677, 12.

Expressed
under a variety
of images.

C.H., 4813, 4814.

7405.

Different
views of life.

7407.

Sensual.

4815.

Some profess to make a mock at death, and bid men live and enjoy themselves whilst they live; live like a gentleman (*quomodo condecet ingenuum*); live for the present hour, drink and play, because they are sure of nothing, and only what they eat and drink is really theirs. “Live joyfully whilst you live.

Life is a trifling gift. Presently it begins, grows strong by degrees, and then by degrees fades away." "Fortune makes ⁶²³⁴ many promises, but keeps none of them. Live, then, for the present day and hour, since nothing else is really ours." Some recommend a diligent practical worship of Venus and ⁷⁴¹¹ Bacchus, in the coarsest terms; others only record their past potations and other sensual indulgences; and whilst allowing that these things have been the ruin of their bodies, console themselves with the reflection that after all these are what make up life. Some speak of the change from life to ⁴⁸¹⁶ death in a very quiet matter-of-fact way: "I have lived and ^{Practical.} struggled for eighty years that I might come to this home at last, full of joy; now I shall be quiet, and stay here always." ⁴⁸¹⁸ "I have been seeking gain all my life, and always losing. ⁷⁴⁰² Now death has come, and I can't do either the one or the other. I hope you who read this will live happy." "Here I ⁴⁸⁰⁵ am where I never was before." "Take heart, no one lives for ever; even Hercules died at last." One man exclaims in a ^{Trifling.} careless jaunty way, "I lived as I like, but I don't know why ⁴⁸¹² I died." Another, "You who read this, go and bathe in the temple of Apollo hard by, as I have done before now with my wife. I would do it now, if I could." Another, in a more ⁴⁸⁰³ dogged, sullen tone, "Here it is; so it is; nothing else could be." Another speaks as if he were perplexed: "Once I was ^{G., 819, 4.} not; now I am not; I know nothing about it; it does not concern me." A fourth and a fifth would fain perplex others: "I was not, and I am, and I shall not be. It causes me no ^{Enigmatical.} pain;" and "Here I am, and I am not;" which last may ^{O.H., 4810, 4811.} bring to our recollection those more elaborate Christian enigmas which are sometimes to be met with in English churchyards, both in Latin and English forms, *e.g.*, in the churchyard of Amwell, near Ware, Hertfordshire:

"That which a being was, what is it? show;
That being which it was, it is not now.
'To be what 'tis, is *not* to be, you see;
That which now is not, shall a being be."

Serious.

Occasionally we meet with a man who took a more serious view of life, and made some kind of review of his own past history, but, as might have been expected, more after the fashion of the Pharisee than of the publican; e.g., "I have restored everything committed to my trust; I have not committed adultery; I have not been quarrelsome; I have done what I could." Or again, "I have been pious and holy; I lived as long as I could; I have never had any lawsuit or quarrel, or grumbling or debts; I have been always faithful to my friends; I had a small fortune but a great mind." "I have always lived as a poor man, but well and honourably, never defrauding any; which [I hope] may benefit my bones."

7412.

C.I.L., vi. 2489.

Natural affection strongly expressed.

It is indeed a melancholy task to review the old Pagan epitaphs, either with reference to the testimony they give as to the popular belief on the condition of the dead, or the insight they afford into the feelings and aspirations of the individual human soul. Let us now look at them in another and far more pleasing aspect, viz., the evidence they offer as to the state of domestic life among the Romans. And here we are struck with the tokens of strong natural affection between parents and children, husbands and wives, which meet us at every turn. Even these are too frequently tainted by an ill-concealed or an avowed rebellion of the heart and will against the dispensations of Providence, which has inverted the natural order of succession by calling away the children before the parents, or destroyed a happy home which had been enjoyed but for too brief a time. We will speak of each class of epitaphs in its turn; and first of those which were set up to the memory of children.

Parents and children.

We have already alluded to the want of resignation which is one of their special characteristics; e.g., a young lady is made to speak in her own proper person (not by the mouth of her parents), and she speaks thus: "I lift up my hands"—and the hands stand there carved between the letters, suiting the action to the word—"I lift up my hands against God who took me

O.H., 4793.

away, though I had done no harm, at the age of twenty." And a boy invites all who read the memorial of his sad fate, cut off in his tenth year, to "curse the harshness of his lot." *O.H.*, 4579. One parent merely says that "the fates judged ill" when they robbed him of his child. Another, who laments the loss of five relatives in one day—a wife and child, a brother, sister, and nephew; the nature of the accident is not told—records his loss by saying that "the angry gods gave all five in one day to everlasting sleep." The bereaved parents commonly inscribe themselves *miserrimi, infelicissimi*; or sometimes they apply these epithets to the children who have died. Mothers especially burst forth into passionate lamentations over their blighted hopes, describing themselves as "left to tears and groans," "condemned to perpetual darkness and daily miserable lamentation." Sometimes they speak more moderately, and only complain of the unnatural cruelty of fate which has obliged them to perform the last sad offices of burial for their children, which the children ought rather to have performed for them. One father, who seems to have lost his daughter by some accident or violence, desires that he may be buried with her, that so his bones may be mixed with hers, which will be some consolation to him. He also desires that there may be buried with him all the tokens of mourning which he had prepared during life—a couch with coverlets, and a cloak, all black. To the freedman, through whose fault he had lost her, he leaves a nail and a rope, that he may hang himself. 4796.

Once only do we find the sentiment expressed by Pagan parents which is not unfrequent on the lips of Christians, that an early death is a token of God's love. They had lost a child of three years old, and they write, "*Quam Di amaverunt, hæc moritur infan)s.*" In another instance, it is said of a boy who died when he was nine, that he had asked that he might die before his parents. But far more commonly, whether the epitaph be put into the mouth of the child or of the parents, the sentiment expressed is one of disappointment and disgust at

R

the premature loss of life and enjoyment, and extinction of bright hopes. Thus a young lady of twelve, who had begun to entertain thoughts of matrimony (or her friends for her), "laments the end of her fate." A child complains that "it has not been allowed him to live beyond seven months," "defrauded of my eighth year," "cut off by an untimely death," &c. And parents utter similar complaints for their children. "Alas! to how bitter a fate have you been abandoned. Before your term of life was ended, you were given over to death, and you died when you ought to be flourishing in your youth." "Orcus has taken from me him in whom was my hope." "Our hope was in our boy; now all is ashes and lamentations;" and they are constantly said to have died "without having deserved it." One bereaved mother begs her son to receive her without delay to himself; another having lost her son, "hated life," and dies, either of a broken heart or possibly by suicide, a fortnight later; and a third utters a word of warning, that wives should not desire to become mothers, because of the pain of parting with their children.

O.H., 737⁸.

The regretful memories of bereaved parents sometimes led them to record on their children's gravestones not only their moral excellences, which might very suitably be commemorated there, but their intellectual, and even their physical gifts of talent, learning, grace, beauty, and the rest. Thus a boy of sixteen is represented as saying of himself that he had always loved his studies, been reverential to his masters, obeyed the commands of his parents; another boy of fifteen is styled *puer reverentissimus*. To a little girl of seven a very pleasing epitaph is inscribed: that she was obedient to her mother, and a favourite with everybody—*matri obsequens, placita omnibus*. Of others, the innocence and simplicity are commended; and these, of course, are generally the very young. On a Roman sarcophagus, found at York, we read *Animæ innocentissimæ* for a child who had only lived ten months; and the same, in Spain, for children of eight or eleven years. All this is natural

and pleasing enough, but we are struck by a certain sense of incongruity when we find on the memorials of the youthful dead a panegyric of talent which has never been developed, or of beauty which is now corruption, such as we find recorded of a youthful bride, not yet sixteen, that she was "of exquisite form and marvellous beauty," and "that her mind was truly worthy of her body;" of a girl of nine, that she was "of singular beauty, most affectionate manners, and learning most excellent, beyond what might lawfully have been expected in one of her age and sex;" of another, of eleven, that just when she had become most learned—her mistress having taught her all arts—she was cruelly taken away; and of several, both boys and girls, that "their talents surpassed their age." One boy of sixteen is said to have "surpassed even old men in wisdom, and never to have had anything in common with youth." Of a girl, her skill in music and grace in dancing are thought worthy of commemoration on her tomb; and the fond mother of another calls upon all strangers who have any feeling to pour forth sighs, and to fill with tears the hollow recess provided for this purpose in the marble urn, for that "beauty's model perished when her daughter (Lyda) died." Another bitterly laments that neither wit, nor amiability, nor loving winning ways (*blanditiæ*), had been of any avail to prolong his child's days; spite of them all, he had become "the foul prey of the brutal Pluto."¹

We come next to the epitaphs which commemorate husbands and wives. And here we cannot help remarking that it has been most unfortunate for the posthumous fame of Roman matrons and *patres-familias* of the Imperial period, that Juvenal should have attained the supremacy he has in our schools and colleges, to the exclusion of his more amiable, and, as we think, more trustworthy contemporary, Pliny the Younger. If we are to believe Juvenal, there were hardly more honest women in Rome than there were gates to Thebes

Husbands and
wives.

¹ Sepolcri scoperti sull' Esquilino nell', 1875, par E. Brizio, No. 223.

or mouths to the Nile ; yet the letters of Pliny alone supply us with a number of very charming portraits among his own acquaintances. According to Juvenal, divorce was the almost normal result of Roman marriage ; he tells us of one lady who had had eight husbands in five years, and of others who counted their husbands by the years of their marriageable life. But the epitaphs tell a different tale ; and although this class of monuments does not enjoy the highest reputation for truthfulness, yet their testimony cannot be lightly set aside. We may call in question some of their epithets, and insist on making serious deductions from their superlatives ; but we can hardly refuse credence to the facts which they record.

Some epithets
perhaps only
conventional.

Benemerenti, for example, is a specimen of an epithet to which we need not attach much value ; hardly, perhaps, any meaning at all, since we find it given to infants who could not have earned a title to the gratitude of survivors. Then, again, we should be disposed to relegate to the same category of fashionable unmeaning compliments, the praise of amiability (*dulcis, dulcissima*) as applied to deceased husbands or wives. No doubt it was used with perfect sincerity in many instances, but it was used so uniformly that its omission would have been almost singular, and suggested invidious comparisons. We are suspicious, too, of such superlative and hyperbolical language as *incomparabilis, miræ sapientiæ*, and *probitatis, rarissimi exempli*, and the like, epithets which we shall find very fashionable on Christian monuments of the latter half of the fourth century, and which are not wanting in the Pagan collections we are now examining. We are much confirmed in our suspicion of the worthlessness of these titles by the fact that when once they had been introduced into the burial-place of any town or village, they were apt to be repeated there again and again—*e.g.*, at least, a score of times on the monuments in Beneventum, though there is no reason why such paragons of perfection should have been monopolised by certain favoured localities. For the same reason, we do not believe that the

I. K. N.,
pp. 82-94.

Roman gentlemen and ladies who lived and died in Spain or Africa loved one another in any special degree above their fellow-countrymen and women in other parts of the Empire, or were remarkable in any singular manner for the possession of a very ordinary quality, which is nevertheless incessantly attributed to them on their tombstones—viz., kindness to their relatives and friends. We gather only that it had become the fashion of those particular colonies to publish this encomium on the dead ; and the fashion was so universally followed that the initials *c.* (or *k.*), *s.*, and *p.*, *i.*, and *s.*, are often made to do duty for the whole phrase—*carus suis*, *pius in suos*.

C.I.L., ii. 1733,
2257, &c., 1138,
1420, &c.

After making all these deductions, however, and others perhaps which need not be enumerated, there still remains a sufficient body of testimony to be gathered from these epitaphs which will serve to rehabilitate to a certain degree the characters of many a Roman matron and her husband. It will show that the natural virtues were by no means wanting in Pagan Rome, even when Juvenal was painting his hideous portrait of their manners, and it engenders a strong suspicion as to the general trustworthiness of the portrait. For, if divorce was so easy as we know from the law books that it was, and if it was also so common as the satirist represents, whence comes it that we have so many scores and hundreds of epitaphs, testifying that husband and wife have lived together for 15, 20, 30, 40, 50, and even 60 (in one instance, 68) years, *sine ullâ querelâ*, *sine ulla contumeliâ*, *sine læsione animi*, *sine ullâ offensâ*, *sine ullo stomacho*, *sine jurgio*, *sine ullâ bile*, *sine lite molestâ* ? Pericles told the Athenian ladies that their highest merit would be, to be but little spoken of, either for praise or blame, by those outside their own household ; and one of the Roman epitaphs before us, set up by a son to his mother, laments that it is difficult for a woman to earn new praises because of the quiet uniform character of her occupations and duties, so that the panegyric of all good ladies, he says, must needs be simple and uniform. And certainly the best womanly virtues are.

Yet the facts recorded are true,

and very creditable.

Domestic virtues of women praised.

recognised in detail and praised in these Pagan monuments. Modesty and chastity, prudence, skill, and diligence in the management of household affairs, the habit of staying at home, industry, gentleness, and other such qualities, are items of eulogy, applied not indiscriminately, yet not rarely, to Roman wives and mothers; and we see no reason to doubt that the widowers who gave this praise to their wives meant what they said. Once or twice we find a woman praised for never having been the wife of more than one husband. Twice a husband praises his wife, or a son his mother, because she nursed her own children. Again and again, the survivor testifies to the imperturbable good nature of her whom he has lost:—"She never gave a bad word to her husband;" "I never received from her any insult or bad word;" "I never had any complaint to make of her at all;" "She never committed any fault except by dying;" and "I never received any pain from her except by her death." There are other epitaphs also of these Pagan husbands departing from the ordinary track, and having a sufficiently definite character of their own to deserve quotation. One, for example, who had lived with his wife for thirteen years, "with great sweetness" declares that "though dead, she will always be alive to him, and always be golden in his eyes." Another says of his wife, that he loved her better than himself, and that their union was such, nothing but death could separate them. Another deceased wife is praised as "chaste, modest, irreproachable;" "a mother to all the world, one who came to the help of all who were in need, and who never saddened any one." A third widower whose married life had lasted eighteen years *sine querelâ*, swears that his regret for his loss is so keen and absorbing that he will never marry again. And a fourth makes loud lamentations, and calls upon the Manes, and entreats Pluto to restore to him his wife, who had lived with him in such harmony until the fatal day; and then, addressing herself, he begs that she will obtain from the Manes, *if there be such spirits*, that he may not any

O. H., 4632.

4626.
4627.
4640.

7385.

C. I. L., v. 154.

O. H., 4623.

7382.

longer suffer this accursed separation ; finally, he prays that the earth may lie light upon her, since she never did any injury on earth, and “ if any one ever injured her, may he be rejected by the gods above and by the gods below, and may the earth lie heavy upon him.”

Side by side with these should be set a few specimens of the epitaphs of widows to their deceased husbands. One begins by saying that they had been bound to one another in love ever since they were a boy and girl (*puer et puella*), that they had been married but a short time, and that even during much of that short time they had been cruelly separated by circumstances. Wherefore she makes a passionate appeal to the Manes to have her husband in good keeping, to be kind and indulgent to him, to allow her to see him in her dreams, and, finally, to enable her speedily to rejoin him. Another, in Tarracona, appeals to the Manes, if they have any sense or feeling (*si saperent*), to withdraw her also from life, since it is no longer enjoyable without her husband, who was her *light* (*dulcem carui lucem cum te amisi*) ; and she concludes by begging that if the abundant tears she sheds for him are of any avail, he will come and show himself to her in dreams at night. A third widow—the last whose words we will quote—having made a common sepulchre for herself and her husband, prays that “ having spent a pleasant life together for twenty-five years in peace and harmony (*æquabili concordia*), they may not be separated even in the grave.”

To these we may add the following epitaph set up by one freedman to the memory of another :—“ Aulus Memmius Urbanus to Aulus Memmius Clarus, my dearest fellow-freedman.—Between me and thee, my most excellent (*sanctissime*) *O.H.*, 4777. fellow-freedman, I know not that there has ever been any quarrel ; and here on this epitaph I call the gods above and below to bear witness to my statement. We met together first in the slave-market, and in one and the same house we

received our liberty ; nor could anything have ever separated us but this thy fatal day."

On the whole, then, we may say that there is a very pleasing display of all the natural affections on the Pagan monuments of Ancient Rome. They are only dumb, or give utterance to painful and discordant sounds, so far as any supernatural hope is concerned. Their utterances of sorrow are often most expressive in their brevity, as where the parents of a "very dear" boy of twelve and a girl of six merely state that they "*deceperunt una unoque lecto elati*,"¹ "disappointed their hopes at the same time, and were carried out to their graves on one bier." But if they venture to look beyond the grave, all is dark and dreary. The parents of two girls who had died young may dare to inscribe a challenge on their tomb that if anybody doubts of the existence of the disembodied spirits, he should make some vow or promise (*sponsione factâ*), and then invoke them, and he will learn ; a husband may boldly call his wife, or a son his parents, divine, a god, or a goddess ; but, speaking generally, there was but one view of the day of death present to the heathen mind—viz., that it was

Perfidus, infelix, horrificusque dies.

O.H., 7346.

7348, 7349

I.R.V., 3133.

¹ In an inscription let into the wall of the staircase at No. 17 Piazza d'Ara Cœli, Rome, the residence of Commendatore de Rossi.

CHAPTER V.

THE TEACHING OF CHRISTIAN EPITAPHS ABOUT DEATH
AND THE DEAD.

Contrast between Pagan and Christian epitaphs—Christian epigraphy perfected by degrees, but its general character shown from the first; simple, hopeful, and joyous; less religious in the fourth and later centuries—Life and love characteristics of the most ancient epitaphs—Some exceptions, chiefly of later date—An episcopal instruction on death in the third century—Language of epitaphs denotes belief in future resurrection—Acclamations for the dead; of life in God, peace, refreshment—These phrases and some others explained—The same prayers found in the Liturgies, ancient and modern—Prayers addressed to the dead by surviving friends and relatives—Religious character of these prayers and their orthodoxy.

OUT of the almost innumerable monumentat inscriptions of Pagan Rome which have reached us, we have sought in our last chapter to gather as clear an idea as we could of the notions entertained by their authors as to the existence of a future state; and we have seen that not one affirms it, though the hearts of many manifestly yearned after it. Affectionate hearts could not bear to think that they were hopelessly and eternally separated from those whom they had loved so truly when alive; and with hesitating tongue, therefore, and in images borrowed from poetry, they call upon the inexorable Manes to deal mercifully with the departed, or to take compassion upon the survivors, and to bring back the image of the beloved in dreams and visions of the night. The Christian inscriptions, on the other hand, imply, even when they do not actually express, a firm belief in the reality of a future life: they pray for the dead as though they were still living, and capable of feeling joy and sorrow; or they call upon them for assistance

Contrast between Pagan and Christian epitaphs.

as though they were still able to give it ; and often the very language in which they speak of death and all that concerns it bears within it an unconscious testimony to faith in a future resurrection.

We do not say that there is no exception to this rule. It ought not to be a matter of surprise to any one to hear that amid the thousands of Christian epitaphs written in the same city during the same period as that from which we derived our estimate of the Pagan view of life and death, it is possible to find an occasional specimen which approaches more nearly to the Pagan than the Christian type, though perhaps some would hardly have expected that this should have happened more frequently in the fourth and fifth than in the preceding centuries. But at any rate, everybody must see that it would be quite unreasonable to expect that there could have been created all at once, in the first moment that Christianity began, a distinctly Christian epigraphy. As in art, so in inscriptions also, the Church would at first merely drop from the general usage of the day all that was contrary to the faith, and then in due time would bring forth new fruit of her own. But as the very first efforts of Christian art—*e.g.*, in the paintings of the Cemetery of the Flavii at Tor Marancia—give good earnest of what was to follow, though it took time to bring it to perfection, so it is easy to detect in the most ancient classes of epitaphs manifest germs of the principal forms of epigraphy which prevailed in the second and third centuries.

Christian epigraphy perfected by degrees, but its general character shown from the first.

We have already selected some specimens from these classes as represented in Columns XVIII.–XX. of the Lateran Museum. We have seen that they were as short and simple as possible, often without a word beyond the name of the deceased, but also frequently whispering, as it were, gentle aspirations of Christian joy, hope, and charity, either in the emblems of the palm branch and the anchor, or in the words *Pax tibi, Pax tecum*. This is all that we read in the Cemetery of St. Priscilla. In those of Prætextatus and St. Agnes we find the same emblem

Simple, hopeful, and joyous.

of hope, together with the symbol of faith, the mystical fish ; also the same prayer for peace, together with another, somewhat more distinct perhaps, "Mayest thou live in God." If any one is disposed to feel disappointment at these phrases as too brief and meagre, he should remember that these three columns are made up of epitaphs upon the gravestones of men who died in the apostolic or immediately post-apostolic age.

If we turn to De Rossi's volume of dated inscriptions, we have seen that the same facts appear there also. Among the first thirty we have the fish and the anchor in the year 234 ; "Mayest thou live among the saints" in 268 [or 279] ; *In pace*, A.D. 290 ; and prayers that the departed may be refreshed "with the holy souls," A.D. 291 ; or that "he may live in God," A.D. 307.

There are also other tokens of Christianity during the same period, such as these :—A man is said to have been taken to God, *receptus ad Deum*, A.D. 217 ; he is said to sleep, A.D. 249 ; to have received the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, A.D. 268 [or 279] ; and to have been fetched by the angels, A.D. 310.

And it is important that we should bear in mind (what has been already stated on De Rossi's irrefragable authority) that hardly one of these Christian *formulae* (except *In pace*, which became extremely common, and in fact superseded all the rest) is to be found on the far more numerous inscriptions bearing later dates. All the tokens of the new religion which we have just mentioned from the gravestones of its professors fall within the compass of less than a hundred years before the accession of Constantine, during which period we have barely thirty dated inscriptions altogether ; but whereas the next two centuries and a half (down to A.D. 590) give nearly fifteen hundred such inscriptions, yet, as we have said, not a single specimen occurs of the same simple, earnest, affectionate prayer for the departed as we have found during the first three centuries.

Less religious
in fourth and
later centuries.

The truth is, that during that early period those who dared to profess the Christian faith did so at the risk of their lives ;

Life and love
characteristics
of the most an-
cient epitaphs.

they valued it therefore as the pearl of great price, for the sake of which they hazarded the loss of all that they had, "counting all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ their Lord."¹ When, therefore, they consigned some dear departed relative to the grave, they had no heart to record his worldly honours, his wisdom, or his talent; their thoughts were concentrated on his relations to God, and his condition in the new world into which he had just entered. They, therefore, either announced with confident assurance that his soul had been admitted to the happy lot reserved for the just who have left this world in peace; that he was united with the saints; that he was in God, and in the enjoyment of good things; or they breathed a humble and loving prayer that he might soon be admitted to a participation in these blessings. They asked for the departed soul peace, and light, and refreshment, and rest in God and in Christ. Sometimes also they invoked the help of his prayers (since they knew that he still lived in God) for the surviving relatives whose time of trial was not yet ended. In a word, they realised most intensely that all the faithful, whether in the body or out of the body, were still living members of one mystical body, the body of Christ; that they formed one great family, knit together in the closest bonds of love; and that this love, "stronger than death," had its proper work and happiness in prayer—prayer of the survivors for those who had gone before, prayer of the blessed for those who were left behind.

Some excep-
tions, chiefly
of later date.

By and by Christians became more numerous, but not more fervent; and now the warm expressions of a lively faith were heard more rarely. In most instances, they were exchanged for the cold conventionalities of a mere obituary record; and sometimes, as we have hinted, utterance is even given to sentiments more Pagan than Christian; such as, "Be of good courage, no man is immortal;" "Eternal sleep;" "Everlasting home" (in epitaphs of the years 356, 363, and 407); and one

¹ Philip. iii. 8.

even speaks of "malignant fortune having caused that the father should do for his son what the son ought rather to have done for his father." We do not say that these expressions must necessarily be understood in a sense absolutely inconsistent with the Christian faith, but certainly they are far from expressing the faith, or even savouring of it; they savour rather of the spirit and temper of the unbelieving world. But they are also manifestly exceptions to the general character of the epitaphs which were inscribed on the graves in the Catacombs. Of these, we repeat, the fundamental ideas are a firm belief in a future life, and a deep practical conviction that the division between this life and the next does not suffice to break the bonds of affection, nor to interrupt the interchange of kindly offices.

But before we produce the proofs of this from the epitaphs themselves of which we are treating, it will not be without its interest that we should briefly pass in review an episcopal instruction upon the subject, which was issued about the time to which a large number of these epitaphs belong, and of which they may reasonably be expected to be a tolerably faithful reflection.

Eusebius tells us that in the middle of the third century a pestilent disease took possession of many provinces of the world, and Africa was among the number of the provinces which suffered. Many Christians behaved with firm faith and true devotion under this trial, whilst others, either through weakness of mind or decay of faith, or because they were too much in love with the sweetness of this life or ill instructed in the truth, stood less steadily, and did not show forth that god-like and invincible courage which they should.

An episcopal instruction on death in the third century.

Under these circumstances the Bishop of Carthage wrote a treatise, "*De Mortalitate*," and the burden of his discourse was this:—He insists that a true Christian ought to welcome death with joy, as introducing him to the port of his everlasting home and bestowing upon him immortality. "For this," he says, "is

our peace, our trustworthy tranquillity, our sure, and firm, and everlasting security." "When the dear ones whom we love depart from the world, we ought rather to rejoice than grieve." "The present mortality may be a pestilence to the enemies of Christ, but to His servants it is a departure to salvation; by it the just are called away to refreshment (*refrigerium*), the unjust hurried off to punishment." He declares that God had often commanded him to be earnest and diligent in teaching that those of our brethren who are delivered from this world by the Divine summons (*accersitione*) ought not to be mourned for, because we know that they are not lost but only sent before (*non amitti, sed præmitti, recedentes præcedere*); that they should be desired indeed, but not bewailed; that we should not put on black garments for them here, when they have just put on white apparel there; that we should be careful not to give occasion to the Gentiles, who might justly find fault with us if we lament as extinct and lost those who, we say, are alive to God. "Eternal life cannot follow except first we have gone out [from this world]; it is not really a going out, but rather a passing over into eternity, when the journey of this life is ended. Let us then show ourselves to be in harmony with our creed, not grieving over the departure of those dear to us, and when the day of our own summons comes, going willingly and without delay to the Lord at His bidding. Heaven is our true country. Why then do we not make haste and run that we may come to it? A great number of our dear ones are expecting us there; a large assembly of parents, brothers, children is eagerly longing for us, assured of their own safety, anxious for ours. How great a joy both for us and for them that we should come to see and embrace them! How great a pleasure in that heavenly kingdom, where there is no more fear of dying! How high and enduring the happiness where there is eternity of living!"

Such was the teaching of St. Cyprian; now let us turn to the epitaphs. And, first, let us see what evidence they give

of a belief in a future life, for this is the essential groundwork of the whole. It is contained in the very name given to their Christian burial-places—"cemeteries," or places for sleeping ; in the name for death, "he sleeps ;" and in the name for burial, *depositio*. About the two former phrases there will be no dispute ; but the last is sometimes called in question, on the plea that it is not exclusively Christian, and passages are quoted from poets of the Augustan age who seem to use it in a similar sense. But it is one thing that the word should have been used two or three times by poets, whose choice of words is often determined, in part at least, by the exigencies of the metre, and quite another thing to find it repeated so incessantly upon Christian gravestones, that it came to be sufficiently represented by a single letter, or by two, DP or D. There is no really certain instance of its use in the same sense on any Pagan monuments. It is said, indeed, to have been found once in this abridged form, DP., on a Pagan sepulchre at Koppach in Austria, and once at full length on a monument in Rome ; but in the first example, Mommsen suggests another reading ; and in the second, it does not stand alone, but is used in its purely classical sense of "placed," or "laid down." *Depositus P. XII. in vascello* is written on the monument—*i.e.*, the child was *laid* in some kind of urn or other vessel in the twelfth division¹ of the *columbarium*. Here it is simply equivalent to *situs*. But it cannot be fairly contended that this is its sense in the thousands of Christian inscriptions in which it stands alone on monuments of the third and fourth centuries. If so, we should have expected it to have been interchanged with other words having the same meaning, such as *situs* or *positus*, whereas these were not used till a later period. We therefore heartily endorse De Rossi's judgment that the word was intended to express the Christian truth that the body was only consigned to the earth for a while, as a sacred deposit which would be reclaimed at some future time when the sea and the earth shall give up their dead.

Language of epitaphs denotes belief in future resurrection. Cemeteries ; Sleep ; Depositio.

O.H., 6694.

4555.

¹ P[arte] or P[ariete], probably.

1
CAR KYRIAC
FIL DVICSSIMO
VIBAS NSPIRITOSAN

2
BONOEINNOCENTIELIC
PASTORISO. Y. X. VITANO
MV. D. XX. V. I. X. VITANO
ET MARCELI NAPARENJ

3
SONNO HETERNAL
AVRILYCEAMELVSOMIBIT
ETMESVVIDIESSINMATRYLLO
CAVISTAOBENXEMERITACENIA
COMANDOBASSIUMACITACENIA

4
DOMINABASSIUMCOM
MANDAMISTRICES
CENTINSTRACINA
TRINOSTRACINOS
QVENDITMISTRICES

5
PETROPARENTESVOS
MATRONATAMATRONA
QVENDITMISTRICES

6
ANSTOLVS TUOBENAMERITIFECIT
QVENDITMISTRICES
BVSXSPIRITVVS BENEBRONS
CATIN OEPETASPROPRIVVA

7
REGINA VIBAS
INDOMINO

8
BONADIO VEDICIS
NOQVNDITANNISOBVSVDX
BENEBRONSIXORACTVIVEINAM
DEO

9
ANFRIMAN
QVENDITMISTRICES
BENEBRONSIXORACTVIVEINAM
DEO

10
EAVSTINADVLCIS
BIBASINDEO

11
REERKERA DEVSANIMANDU

12
BOLOSADVESTI
BIREFICE RETOVAM
BOLANOSOXURZESTI
REBHNOCIB

13
ELPHNH
FHYYXHCQY
OYXOAEI

14
ACAPEVIBES
INETERNVN

15
XPAVLINONEOFITO
INPACEVIMXIANOSV

16
ELOYMENH
EHEPHNHEOY
QVENDITMISTRICES

17
XASTONIAVINCOPEON
NAQVEVIXITANISXHEPDS
VIBKALMARDECESSIT
DECORPORE

18
BICTORI NA IN
PACE ETINX

19
DAPNERVIDVTOQVAVIX
ACISIANHQAUVAVITA

20
LEOPARDOINOFTO
QVAVIXANILMXX
DEPVKALARSNP

21
TEUCIKILORENEMERONTI QVAVIX ANNOS
XILIDISSON EXVITVIRCO DESACVLVET
NEOPTVS IN PACE
PARENTES FECERVNT
DEP IIII NONAS AVG

22
VCLIANVS BACIO VALERIO
QVIBISFANVIII
VIII DIESXXI CATECVN

1. To dear Cyriacus, sweetest son. Mayest thou live in the Holy Spirit.
2. Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour. To Pastor, a good and innocent son, who lived 4 years 5 months and 26 days. Vitalio and Marcellina, his parents.
3. In eternal sleep. Aurelius Gemellus, who lived ... years and 8 months and 18 days. His mother made this for her dearest well-deserving son. In peace. I commend [to thee], Bassilla, the innocence of Gemellus.
4. Lady Bassilla [= Saint Bassilla], we, Crescentinus and Micina, commend to thee our daughter Crescen[tina], who lived 10 months and ... days.
5. Matronata Matrona, who lived a year and 52 days. Pray for thy parents.
6. Anatolius made this for his well-deserving son, who lived 7 years 7 months and 20 days. May thy spirit rest well in God. Pray for thy sister.
7. Regina, mayest thou live in the Lord Jesus.
8. To my good and sweetest husband Castorinus, who lived 61 years 5 months and 10 days ; well deserving. His wife made this. Live in God.
9. Amerimnus to his dearest well-deserving wife, Rufina. May God refresh thy spirit.
10. Sweet Faustina, mayest thou live in God.
11. Refresh, O God, the soul of
12. Bolosa, may God refresh thee, who lived 31 years ; died on the 19th of September. In Christ.
13. Peace to thy soul, Oxycholis.
14. Agape, thou shalt live for ever.
15. In Christ. To Paulinus, a neophyte. In peace. Who lived 8 years.
16. Thy spirit in peace, Filumena.
17. In Christ. Æstonia, a virgin ; a foreigner. Who lived 41 years and 8 days. She departed from the body on the 26th of February.
18. Victorina in peace and in Christ.
19. Dafnen, a widow, who whilst she lived burdened the Church in nothing.
20. To Leopardus, a neophyte, who lived 3 years 11 months. Buried on the 24th of March. In peace.
21. To Felix, their well-deserving son, who lived 23 years and 10 days ; who went out of the world a virgin and a neophyte. In peace. His parents made this. Buried on the 2d of August.
22. Lucilianus to Badius Valerius, who lived 9 years 8 [months] 22 days. A Catechumen.

Acclamations
for the dead.

Of the interchange of good offices between living Christians and the dead, the epitaphs in Column IX. of the Lateran Museum abound in proofs. We have printed on the preceding page a few specimens taken from photograph copies, and in explaining them we will give further illustrations of the subject from other examples, both in the Lateran Museum and elsewhere.

(1) Of life in
God.

On Nos. 1, 7, 8, 10, and 14 of our selection we find the survivors praying for the deceased that he may live in God, or making a confident assertion that he does so live already, and will continue to do so for ever. In the Lateran there are eight or ten other specimens of the same kind in one or other of its forms, but we need not quote them. We cannot, however, omit one which was found some fifteen years since in one of the galleries near the Papal crypt in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus. All the gravestones near it were marked with anchors, ships, figures of the Good Shepherd, doves bearing the olive branch, and other symbols or phrases of the highest antiquity; and although the epitaph is longer than most of those written in the second or third centuries, both its Latinity, the classical form of the letters, and the religious phrase that is used in it, forbid us to assign it to any later date.

Bull. 1863,
p. 82.

CHRE·SI·ME·DUL·CIS·SI·MA·ET·MI·HI·PI
EN·tis·si·MA·fi·li·a·VI·VAS·IN·DEO·QUE
RED·DE·DIT·ANN·V·M·VII·D·V·CHRE·SI·MUS·ET
VI·CTO·RI·NA·PA·REN·TES·VICTORIA

VIVAS IN DEO

“Chresime, my sweetest and most affectionate daughter, mayest thou live in God, who gave up [her soul] at the age of five years seven months and five days. Chresimus and Victorina, her parents. *Victoria, mayest thou live in God.*”

It is evident that the deceased child had the names of both her parents, and the stone had been first cut according to the instructions of the father, who addressed her by the name she had received from him, Chresima. Then the salutation of the

mother, calling her Victoria, and repeating the acclamation, was added by another hand ; it was probably dictated by the mother herself, as the fossor was closing the grave.

Nos. 6, 13, 16, and 18 predicate or petition peace for the (2) Peace. departed, and the same comforting word is not omitted from others also, Nos. 15 and 21. In Column IX. at the Lateran we read, "Peace to thy soul, Zosima ;" "Saturnina sleeps in peace ;" "Lais, with peace ;" "May thy spirit rest in good ;" Nos. 29, 35. 15. and immediately outside the gate of the gallery, at the head of the staircase, is a whole class of inscriptions from the Cœmeterium Ostrianum, consisting simply of the name of the deceased, followed by this formula :—*Attica in pace, Romano in pace, Gaiane in pace, Ireneo in pace, Dextra in pace, Istercorio benemerenti te in pace, &c., &c.*

Another acclamation, of which we have given some examples (3) Refreshment. in Nos. 9, 11, and 12, asks for refreshment for the deceased ; and in an epitaph of the Kircherian Museum we read, "Kalemere, may God refresh thy spirit, together with that of thy sister Hilare ;" and in the Vatican,

ΗΡΑΚΛΙΑ ΡΩΜΗ
[Ε]ΙC ΑΝΑΠΑΥCΙΝ
COT H ΨΥΧΗ

"Heraclia Roma, thy soul into refreshment."

Nobody can fail to recognise the substantial identity of the episcopal instruction and the popular creed. Not only do the same thoughts and sentiments pervade both, but in many instances they are expressed by the same words. With St. Cyprian, to die is "to be summoned by God," "to go out of this world," "to retire," and "to go before." The dead "live to God," are gone to "peace" and "refreshment ;" and every one of these words and phrases occur more or less frequently on the tombstones. St. Cyprian, indeed, does not speak of the living making supplication for these blessings for the dead ; for the motive of his writing led him rather to insist on the certain blessedness of the dead ; but he speaks of the dead who are thus secure as to their own salvation, being still anxious

about ours, and this, of course, lies at the foundation of the prayers which the survivors were in the habit of addressing to them for the charity of their assistance.

These phrases explained.

We will return to these presently, but first let us say a few words about the origin and meaning of each of the formulæ

that we have seen used on behalf of the dead, and let us show how they were the natural and legitimate fruit of Christian

Life.

doctrine and belief. And first of life. To a Pagan mourner, smarting under some bitter bereavement, it would have seemed

the most heartless mockery to speak of life as still present, or to ask for it as a gift presently to be bestowed, just at the moment when it had been taken away. On the other hand,

nothing could be more natural than that the Christian should thus intimately unite the thoughts of life and death. Our

blessed Lord, when raising Lazarus from the dead, had declared that He was Himself "the Resurrection and the Life."

"He that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live, and every one that liveth and believeth in Me shall not die for ever." Christians were taught that, by virtue of their baptism,

they had "put on Christ;" that though "dying, yet behold they live;" that in this world they were "already dead, and their life was hid with Christ in God."¹ This hidden life of the

soul was alone worthy of the name of life, and the death of the body did not destroy but perfect it. When that event should

happen, then that part of them which had heretofore been corruptible would put on incorruption, and what had been

mortal would put on immortality; the body would only exchange one life which was fleeting and miserable for another

which was higher and better and more enduring. We have

proof in the "Acts of the Martyrs" that such thoughts were present to their minds when they were brought near to death;

and doubtless they were present also to those who buried the dead. "Offer sacrifice to the gods," said the Heathen magistrate to St. Julius, "and you shall live with us."

"To live with you," was the spirited reply, "would be to die; but when I shall have died, then I live." "You are determined then

¹ St. John xi. 25; Gal. iii. 27; 2 Cor. vi. 9; Coloss. iii. 3.

to die, and not to live," retorted the magistrate. "I choose to die temporarily that I may live eternally."¹

But the Christian epitaphs asked not only for life but also Refreshment. for "refreshment" (*refrigerium*). This is a word which may be found in some Pagan epitaphs, not in the sense of a gift asked for the dead, but as an invitation to the living to partake of bodily refreshment in a repast. *Refrigeri sine bile* is part of a long Pagan inscription to the memory of one Aurelius Vitalis, who built a monument for the burial of himself and relatives R.S., iii. and a few special friends, whom he invited to assemble together at his tomb whilst they lived, and there to take refreshment, eating and drinking in peace and harmony with one another. And as the joys of heaven are often represented in Holy Scripture under the figure of a feast, some persons would interpret the word in the same sense when it occurs on Christian epitaphs or in the "Acts of the Martyrs"—*e.g.*, in the "Acts of St. Perpetua," who saw in a vision her brother *refrigerantem*—*i.e.* (as they interpret), seated at the heavenly banquet. Others, however, insist upon understanding it in this place as merely "refreshed" in opposition to the heat and thirst from which he had been previously suffering; as, also, when St. Maximus of Turin, in one of his sermons on St. Laurence, opposed the *refrigerium* promised in the kingdom of heaven to the fiery torments which that saint suffered in his martyrdom. The Psalmist seems to use it as a synonym for relief from distress and difficulty in general, as when he says, "Thou hast brought us into a net. Thou hast laid affliction on our back; we have passed through fire and water, and Thou hast brought us out into a refreshment" (Ps. lxxv. 11); and perhaps the ancient Christians used it also in the same wide sense, as expressing the cessation of all evil and the enjoyment of all good.

Whatever may have been the precise meaning which they attached to the word, there is abundant evidence that it was familiar to them in connection with their thoughts and prayers for the dead. Tertullian uses it at the very beginning of the

¹ *Acta Sincera*, Ruinart, tom. iii. p. 273.

third century in his account of the devotions of a widow praying for her deceased husband. "She prays for his soul," he says,¹ "asks for refreshment for him, and for herself a share with him in the first resurrection, and she offers [sacrifice] for him on the anniversary of his death." St. Paulinus, of Nola, writing to his dear friend Amandus,² announces to him the death of his brother, concerning whom he expresses a fear that he has gone out of this world "a debtor" to God; whereupon he entreats Amandus to unite with him in the labour of prayer "that the merciful God may through your prayers refresh his soul with the drops of His mercy. For as the fire enkindled by Him will burn even to the lowest hell,³ so without doubt the dew of His pardon will penetrate to Hades (*infera*), so that those who are suffering there in the burning darkness may be refreshed by the dew and light of His pity."

The same language was consecrated to Christian ears by its use in the most ancient Liturgies—*e.g.*, in a prayer that "Christ will, through the intercession of His holy martyrs, grant to our dear ones who sleep in Him refreshment in the abode of the living;"⁴ or another, "that the prayers of the blessed martyrs will so commend us to Christ that He will grant eternal refreshment to our dear ones who sleep in Him;" and there are other petitions also to the same effect.⁵

In pace.

Other epitaphs that we have seen prayed for peace, or predicated that the deceased is already in the enjoyment of peace. The precise meaning of this, as of the last, has been the subject of much controversy. Where it is predicated of the deceased, some authors understand it in the same sense as the word is used by Tertullian, St. Cyprian,⁶ and other of the earliest Fathers—*viz.*, as denoting communion with the Church. And

¹ De Monog, c. x.

² Epist. xx. p. 191, ed. Antwerp, 1622.

³ Deut. xxxii. 22.

⁴ Muratori, Liturg. Rom., t. ii. pp. 652, 653.

⁵ Some authors have illustrated these prayers for *refrigerium* by reference to one or two Pagan epitaphs in which Osiris is invoked to give cold water to the deceased. *O. H.*, 4766. Fabretti, p. 465, xix. Mus. Veron. 3183. But there is no trace of this Orientalism in the inscriptions of the Catacombs.

⁶ St. Cyprian, De Lapsis, cc. xv. xxxiii.; Tertull., De Virg. Vel., c. ii., De Pudic., c. xii.

it cannot be doubted that in the Christian inscriptions which have come to us from Africa this interpretation is correct. But in these, as we have already seen, the word is coupled with life, not with death ; it follows the verb *vixit* ; that is to say, it is not asserted concerning the deceased that he sleeps in peace now, neither is it made a subject of prayer that he may enjoy peace hereafter, but it is said that he has lived in peace for so many years and months, and this can only be understood of the peace and communion of Holy Church.

Others have preferred to see in this peace, when predicated of the dead, a reference to the troubles and sufferings of Christians during life, from which the peace of death was a happy deliverance. And more than one passage might be quoted from the Jewish Scriptures¹ which would seem to countenance such an interpretation. Moreover, we are told² that in the calendars of the Greek Church these words are used to distinguish confessors from martyrs, those saints who died a natural death from those who had sealed their testimony with their blood ; just as the Prophet Jeremias uses *in pace* in opposition to *in gladio*, saying, "Thou shalt not die by the sword, but thou shalt die in peace."³ No doubt, therefore, this would be a very natural use of the word ; yet it can hardly be accepted as an adequate explanation of it, as it was understood by the early Christians when they inscribed it on their gravestones. It cannot be doubted that they had present to their minds the peace of a joyful resurrection and happy eternity ; not, indeed, excluding all idea of that peace and reconciliation with God which is to be enjoyed in this world as a prelude and preparation for the other, yet at the same time not always thinking of this peace or expressly alluding to it ; or rather thinking of them united together, as St. Cyprian did when he wrote concerning heretics,⁴ "They cannot arrive at the reward

¹ Ecclus. xlv. 11. ; Wisdom iii. 3.

² Scacchius de Not. et Sign. Sanct., c. ix. 2.

³ Jer. xxxiv. 5 ; cf. Gen. xv. 15 ; 4 Kings xxii. 20.

⁴ De Unit. Eccles. xi. in fin.

of peace who have broken the peace of the Lord by the madness of discord." Arnobius, too, writing about the same time, couples it with pardon of sins, and says distinctly that we ask for it both for the living and the dead :—*Pax et venia a nobis postulatur . . . et adhuc vitam degentibus et resolutis corporum vincione.*"¹

Good.

In one of the inscriptions which we quoted just now from Column IX. of the Lateran Collection (No. 15), there was a prayer that the spirit of the deceased (Lais) might rest in good, *in bono*, and the same phrase is to be seen in many other epitaphs both of the same and of other collections. We may still read in the mortar round one of the graves in the Catacomb of St. Alexander on the Via Nomentana, *Saviniane, Spiritus tu(u)s in bono* ; Boldetti gives us another, *Salonice, Ispiritus tu(u)s in bonu* ; Marangoni a third,² *Attice, Spiritus tu(u)s in bonu* ; and others have been preserved in books not so easily accessible. Some persons take *bonum* in these epitaphs as being simply equivalent to God, the one Supreme Good, just as the evil from which we pray to be delivered at the end of the Lord's Prayer may be understood as standing for the Evil one himself, as well as for all other minor forms of evil. *Suscipe servum tuum in bonum* is a prayer of the Royal Psalmist (Ps. cxviii. 122) ; and in another Psalm he says, " His soul shall dwell in good things " (xxiv. 13). M. Le Blant quotes an ancient commentator on this Psalm (Cassiodorus) as saying that the word " good things " is here used, because the just do not on leaving this life at once receive the complete happiness promised to the saints after the resurrection ; and yet, through the confident expectation they have of receiving one day that fulness of reward, they already " dwell in good ; " they are in a state of enjoyment through the foretaste of the judgment that is to come. And M. Le Blant believes that in like manner the word *bonum* was used in these epitaphs as furnishing by its indefiniteness a convenient cloak for the uncertainty in which men's minds were

p. 418.

ii. p. 406.

¹ *Adversus gentes*, lib. iv. c. 36.

² *Acta Sti. Victorini*, p. 119.

then fluctuating as to the condition of departed souls in the interval between death and the general resurrection. This uncertainty is clearly testified by the words of St. Augustine¹ about his departed friend Nebridius, where he says that "he is now in Abraham's bosom, whatever the place may be that ought to be understood by that word." St. Gregory Nazianzus expresses the same doubt; and, of course, many and weighty names of the first few centuries might be quoted in favour of believing that the souls even of the blessed were detained in an intermediate state of expectation until the time of "the first resurrection." It is remarkable, however, that no trace of this doctrine is to be found in the Christian epitaphs of Rome, which must certainly have been a faithful reflection of the popular belief upon the subject, and we see no reason therefore for adopting M. Le Blant's explanation of *in bono*. The general tenor of the epitaphs in the Catacombs is strongly against it; sometimes (one is almost tempted to think) designedly so—*e.g.*,

PRIMA VIVIS IN GLORIA DEI ET IN PACE DOMINI NOSTRI.

"Prima, thou livest in the glory of God, and in the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ."²

He seems disposed to extend the same interpretation to another phrase which was sometimes used—*viz.*, *cum sanctis*, *inter sanctos*—because St. Paul teaches³ that the saints, "though approved by faith, yet have not yet received the promise, God providing some better thing for us, that they should not be perfected without us." But without entering into any discussion as to the full meaning of this text, we think it cannot be doubted that the general tone of the most ancient Christian epitaphs is more in harmony with such a picture as is drawn by St. Paulinus of Nola, for example,⁴ who represents a whole host

Inter sanctos.
R.S., ii. xlv., 18;
i. xxiii., 9.

¹ Confess., ix. 3.

² Scratched in the mortar round a grave in the lower part of the Cemetery of Thraso.—Marangoni, *Acta Sti. Victorini*, p. 69.

³ Heb. xi. 39, 40.

⁴ Natal., vi. 140.

of the saints going forth from heaven to receive the soul of St. Felix as soon as it had left the body, and conducting it in triumph before the throne of God. This is certainly the thought which dictated the following epitaph :—

Bull., 1875,
p. 19.

PAULO FILIO MERENTI IN PA
CEM TE SUSCIPIAN OMNIUM ISPIRI
TA SANCTORUM QUI VIXIT ANNOS II. DIES N. L.

This epitaph has been already quoted in another connection (p. 25), but it may be repeated here for the sake of the illustration it gives to our present subject. We desire also to point out its striking resemblance to the language of the Ritual, which, as the dead body is taken up to be carried from the church to the grave, breaks forth into a most plaintive yet inspiring acclamation, "May the angels lead thee into Paradise; may the martyrs receive thee (*suscipiant te*) at thy approach, and lead thee to the holy city Jerusalem. May the choir of angels receive thee, and mayest thou have eternal rest with Lazarus, who was once poor."

This last phrase is of course equivalent to a mention of Abraham's bosom, and corresponds to the prayers of some of the early martyrs—*e.g.*, of SS. Tryphon and Respicius, A.D. 250, who prayed in the midst of their torments, "Lord Jesus, receive our souls, and place them in the bosom of Thy patriarchs."¹

Agreement of
these prayers
with those of
the liturgies.

But it is most especially in the liturgies that we shall find the originals of all these prayers and aspirations for the dead, so that De Rossi justly calls them the very echo of the prayers of the liturgy. Of one inscription in particular—

R.S., ii. 305.

IN PACE SPIRITUS SILVANI, AMEN,

he says, one seems to "hear in it the last words of the funeral rites, just as the tomb is being closed and the sorrowing survivors bid farewell to the grave." And we may almost say the same of another, set up to the memory of a child who died when five years old, and of her father, who died the following

¹ *Acta Sincera*, tom. i. 375.

day. Nothing is added but the words *Suscipiantur in pace*. *R.S.*, iii. 126. But indeed it is scarcely possible to name a single formula used in these epitaphs—unless it be something perfectly exceptional—which is absent from the ancient liturgies ; and, contrariwise, almost all the prayers for the dead in our liturgical books find their germ at least, if not their exact prototype, on the gravestones of the Catacombs. Thus, when we bury the dead, we pray that “henceforth they may live to God.” In the Canon of the Mass we pray daily, “Remember, O Lord, Thy servants who have gone before us, and who sleep in the sleep of peace ;” and if we go down into the Catacombs of SS. Nereus and Achilles we read the same memento on the old gravestones that are lying there.

ΑΥΡ. ΑΙΔΙΑΝΟΣ ΠΑΦΛΑΓΩΝ ΘΕΟΥ ΔΟΥΛΟΣ ΠΙΣΤΟΣ
ΕΚΟΙΜΗΘΗ ΕΝ ΕΙΡΗΝΗ ΜΝΗCΘΗ ΑΤΤΟΤ Ο ΘΕΟΣ ΕΙC ΤΟΤΕ
ΑΙΩΝΑC

“Aurelius Ælianus of Paphlagonia, a faithful servant of God, sleeps in peace. May God remember him for ever.”

ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙC ΕΤ ΛΕΟΝΤΙΑ ΧΡΙCΤΙΚΗ ΦΕΙΛΙΑ
ΒΕΝΕΜΕΡΤΙ ΜΝΗCΘΗC ΙΗCΟΤC Ο ΚΥΡΙΟC ΤΕΚΝΟΝ.

“Demetrius and Leontia to their well-deserving daughter, Sirica. Lord Jesus, remember our child.”

The prayer in the Canon of the Mass runs on, “Grant to them, O Lord, and to all who are at rest in Christ, a place of refreshment, light, and peace ;” or, as it is more fully expressed in a special prayer for all the dead lying in any cemetery, “Grant them a place of refreshment, the blessedness of rest, and clearness of light ;” or in another special prayer on the anniversary of a death, “Place them in a region of peace and light, and bid them be partakers in the lot of Thy saints.”

The only petition in these collects of the Church of which we have not seen examples from the Catacombs is that for ^{Prayers for light.} light ; and even this has been found in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus. De Rossi has placed it among the rarer class of

epitaphs (*dictionis singularis*) in Column XVII. at the Lateran. It runs thus :—

xvii. 14.

DOMINE NE QUANDO ADUMBRETUR SPIRITUS
VENERES DE FILIUS IPSEIUS QUI SUPERSTI
TIS SUNT BENIROSUS PROJECTUS.

“O Lord, let not the spirit of Venera be in darkness—Of her sons who survive, Venerosus and Projectus.”

This petition for light may have been suggested to the early Christians by the language which they heard around them coupling death and darkness together. Thus a Pagan mother says on the epitaph of her son that he had enjoyed the hospitable light (*hospitio lucis*) for thirty-eight years, but that now a dark day has carried him off from the light and buried him in bitter death. “Traveller, curse me not as you pass, for I am in darkness and cannot answer,” says another Heathen inscription; and a third, “Here I lie, unhappy girl, in darkness.” And sometimes they set up lamps at the tombs of their friends, accompanied by the most earnest and pathetic appeals that they might be kept always burning. On the other hand, light is often spoken of in the New Testament as belonging in a special way to the Christian dispensation, and an essential characteristic of its Divine Founder. His forerunner had said of Him, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men;” and He said of Himself, “I am the light of the world; he that followeth me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”¹ Hence, it was the practice of the ancient Christians every evening at the lighting of the lamps to give thanks to God for the gift of faith whereby their souls were enlightened.² Thus on several accounts, whether we consider the natural darkness of the grave and the impenetrable gloom in which it was shrouded to the Pagan mind, or whether we take light as

O.H., 7375.
Gruter, 923, 5.

Muratorii,
1384, 7.

O.H., 4838; 4416.
I.R.N., 166.
C.I.L., i. 2102.

Bull., 1867, p.
14; 1868, p. 78.

¹ St. John i. 4; viii. 12.

² See the Greek Evening Hymn, iii. in Daniel's *Thesaurus Hymnologicus*, t. iii. p. 5; also Prudentius, *Cathemerin.*, Hymn V. *ad incensum Cerei*.

another name for grace and mercy, as in the Psalms,¹ or as an emblem of faith, or, lastly, as a synonym for Christ Himself, we can understand why this too should have entered into the petitions of Christians for their dead. God dwells in light inaccessible, and what faith does for the living the presence of God does yet more perfectly for those who have penetrated within the veil; and hence in the famous ancient epitaph of Autun we find Christ directly addressed by this title of Light of the dead.

ET ΕΤΔΟΙ ΜΗΤΗΡ ΟΕ ΔΙΤΑΖΟΜΑΙ ΦΩΣ ΤΟ ΘΑΝΟΝΤΩΝ.

"May my mother rest well, I pray Thee, O Light of the dead."

We have seen St. Cyprian instructing his people that the dead who are at rest in the Lord enjoy a sense of blessed security indeed for themselves and their own salvation, but are solicitous for those whom they have left behind; and hence in the epitaph which stands as No. 5 in our selection, an infant is asked to pray for her parents; in No. 6 a child of seven is bid to pray for his sister; in another, the foster parents of a lady who has died at the age of thirty or thirty-six² call upon her to pray for her husband, Celsinianus.

Prayers to the saints.

AURELIVS AGAPETVS ET AURELIA
FELICISSIMA ALVMNE FELICITATI
DIGNISSIMÆ QVE VICSIT ANIS XXX ET VI
ET PETE PRO CELSINIANV COJVTEM.

L. M., viii. 12.

To which we may add another from the Cemetery of St. Calixtus:—

VINCENTIA IN ΧΡ ΠΕΤΑΣ ΠΡΟ ΦΗΕΒΕ ΕΤ ΠΡΟ VΙRGΙΝΙΟ ΕJVS.

"Vincentia in Christ. Pray for Phœbe and her husband."

In other instances, there is no blood relationship between the

¹ See Bellarmine in Ps. xlii.

² It is not improbable that M. (menses) was accidentally omitted after VI., and that she was only 30½ when she died.

deceased and those who ask his prayers; but he is "an innocent child," and is now "with the saints," and therefore "the man who composed his epitaph and the man who carved it beg to be "remembered in his holy prayers." (The original is in the Kircherian Museum).

ΔΙΟΝΤΙΟC ΝΗΠΙΟC ΑΚΑΚΟC ΕΝΘΑΔΕ
ΚΕΙΤΕ ΜΕΤΑ ΤΩΝ ΑΓΙΩΝ ΜΝΗCΚΕCΘΕ
ΔΕ ΚΑΙ ΗΜΩΝ ΕΝ ΤΑΙC ΑΓΙΑΙC ΤΜΩΝ
ΠΡΕΤΧΑΙC ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΓΑΤΥΑ [Ν] ΤΟC ΚΑΙ
ΓΡΑΨΑΝΤΟC.

At other times the request for prayers is general, and no special plea is urged, as in the following, the first of which comes from the Cemetery of St. Callixtus; the second from the Cemetery of Thraso, on the Via Salaria Nova; the next two may still be seen in the Cemetery of SS. Nereus and Achilles; and the last have been preserved to us by Boldetti.

R.S., iii.; Tav.,
xxviii., 22.
Bull., 1873, p. 71.

(1.) JANUARIA BENE REFRIGERA ET ROGA PRO NOS

(2.) SOZON BENEDICTUS
REDIDIT AN NOBE
BERUS¹ Ξ ISPIRUM
IN PACE ET PET PRONOBIS.

(3.) ...VIBAS IN PACE ET PET PRO NOBIS.

(4.) ΖΗCΑΙC ΕΝ ΚΩ ΚΑΙ ΕΡΩΤΑ ΤΗΕΡ ΗΜΩΝ.

p. 418.

(5.) JOVIANE, VIBAS IN DEO ET ROG...

p. 490.

(6.) SABBATI, DULCIS ANIMA, ROGA ET PETE.

(1.) Januaria, mayest thou be well refreshed, and pray for us.

(2.) Sozon Benedictus died at the age of nine years. May the real Christ receive thy spirit in peace; and pray for us.

(3.) Mayest thou live in peace, and pray for us.

(4.) Mayest thou live in the Lord, and pray for us.

(5.) Jovianus, mayest thou live in God, and pray...

(6.) Sabbatius, sweet soul, ask and pray...

Of these formulas, *pete pro nobis* was used so frequently that

¹ *Verus* seems used here against the Marcionite heresy, which taught that Christ was no reality, but only an appearance: whence Tertullian wrote on the *vera caro* of Christ. At a later period, *Verus Deus* would rather have been insisted upon.

it is found abbreviated into the mere initial letters, either of its words or syllables, P.P.N., or PT.P.NB. ; just as on Pagan inscriptions DD. is put for *dedicat*, BNM. for *benemerenti*, C.I.L., iii., p. 1185. MM. for *memoria*, PP. for *perpetuus* or *præpositus*, and even QD. for *quondam*.

If we were writing a theological treatise or forging weapons of controversy, it would be necessary to enter into many further particulars about these inscriptions ; but we have now said enough for our present purpose, which is only to set before our readers a fair account of the most ancient Christian epitaphs taken as a whole. We have called attention to their chief characteristics, and the contrast between their life, hope, and cheerfulness and the cold despondency or the defiant wrath of the inscriptions on Pagan sepulchres has been brought out sufficiently.

We will only add a word as to the value that ought to be attached to the interchange of prayers between the living and the dead, of which we have seen so many examples. It is sometimes said that they were no real acts of faith, hope, or charity, no religious acts at all, but the mere senseless outpourings of natural affection, differing in form only, and accidentally rather than substantially, from the Pagan acclamations that the earth might lie lightly on their dead. It is said that they were dictated by the heart rather than the head, and probably proceeded from the less instructed portion of the Christian community.

The religious value of these prayers,

It seems hard to see on what plea the merit of a religious act can be denied to such an inscription as the following :—

LUCIFERE COJUGI DULCISIME OMNEM
DULCITUDINEM CUM LUCTUM MAXIME
MARITO RELIQUIT, ET MERUIT TITULUM
INSCRIBI UT QUISQUI DE FRATRIBUS LEGERIT ROGET DEU
UT SANCTO ET INNOCENTI SPIRITO AD DEUM SUSCIPIATUR.

L.M., ix. 10.

“To my sweetest wife Lucifera, who was all sweetness,¹ whereas she

¹ Where there is such flagrant violation of all rules of grammar, we can only translate according to the most probable conjecture of the meaning.

left to her husband the greatest sorrow, and she has deserved that an epitaph should be inscribed to her, to the end that whosoever of the brethren shall read it may ask God that her holy and innocent spirit may be received to God."

On a corner of the gravestone it is written in smaller letters that this lady died at the early age of twenty-two years, four months, and ten days. No doubt the widower's epitaph is dictated by the heart ; it is the expression of sorrowing love ; but it is also, to our seeming at least, an act of piety and faith ; and the writer asks his brethren to do precisely that act of religion on behalf of his wife which we find from scores of examples that they were in the continual habit of doing for those who were nearest and dearest to them.

and their
orthodoxy.

And as to the invocation of the martyrs being an unauthorised act of devotion, common only to the ignorant, it will be sufficient perhaps to quote the conclusion of Pope Damasus' inscription in honour of St. Agnes, which Marangoni¹ was fortunate enough to rescue from destruction when it was already in the masons' hands, and which still survives in the wall by which we descend to her Basilica *fuori le mura*. In it the Pope, after invoking her as an object of veneration, a distinguished martyr, and the glory of Christian modesty, begs her to lend a favourable ear to his prayers. What more or what less was asked of their departed friends by the more humble writers of the several epitaphs we have quoted above ?

L.M., iii. 1.

O VENERANDA MIHI SANCTUM DECUS ALMA PUDORIS
UT DAMASI PRECIBUS FAVEAS PRECOR INCLYTA MARTYR.

¹ Acta Sti. Victorini, p. 137.

CHAPTER VI.

DOGMATIC ALLUSIONS.

Unreasonable to look for an exposition of Christian doctrine in epitaphs, yet some allusions to it may be expected—This expectation realised with reference to belief in one God, in Christ and in the Holy Ghost—Some peculiar phrases with reference to the Holy Trinity—Devotion to the Saints.

THE inscriptions engraved on ordinary tombstones in the Catacombs are necessarily short, so that they often contain little more than what is of the very essence of such documents—viz., the name of the deceased. But even if there had been no such narrow limits to the space that might be used, yet it would not have been reasonable to expect from them any complete enunciation of the articles of the Christian faith. It might naturally have been expected that some of those articles would be alluded to, especially those which had reference to the present condition or future prospects of the dead; and here, as we have seen, there is no reason to complain of their silence; but it would be ridiculous to look for anything like a formal statement of the whole Christian Creed.

It was necessary to premise this remark, because it has been sometimes attempted to draw inferences hostile to certain doctrines of the Catholic faith from the supposed silence of early Christian epitaphs about them, as though it were usual to find a full profession of a man's creed upon his tombstone. On the other hand, we should have a right to be greatly astonished if it were not possible, from a collection of several thousands of sepulchral inscriptions belonging to men and women professing the same religion, to gather some idea, more or less

Unreasonable to look for the creed in Christian epitaphs.

Yet some allusions to it may be expected.

distinct, of some of the principal tenets and characteristics of that religion. Let us inquire, therefore, what information we can gain from the epitaphs of the Roman Catacombs as to the object of Christian worship.

Epitaphs of the Catacombs show belief in one God.

Bull., 1877,
p. 25.

At the head of this series De Rossi places a few epitaphs which bear the title (so to call it) of "the name of God;" this being, as he rightly calls it, the initial formula of every solemn Christian act, because the Christian religion is essentially the worship of the one true God, in opposition to the doctrines of polytheism. Hence, in some of the edicts of the Emperors who persecuted the Church, this is the very name and title by which the Christians are called, "men who confess themselves to be worshippers of God." On the same principle Lactantius calls the Christian religion *Religio Dei* and *Lex Dei*; and the Pagan Symmachus, intending to say that a large number of the citizens of Benevento are Christian, thinks it sufficient to say that "they worship God."

Bull., 1863,
p. 59.

De Rossi has found a very ancient *graffito* in St. Callixtus, saying *Mensurius in Deu credidit*, "Mensurius believed in God;" and Boldetti gives another inscription which seems to speak still more precisely, and says that such an one "believed in one God" (*In unu Deu credidit*). St. Ambrose, however, and other authors, tell us that from time immemorial the Roman Church always recited the creed without the addition of this word *Unum*, so that we are led to suspect either that this particular person was a stranger in Rome, familiar with the formularies of another country, or else perhaps that he had taken part in some of the dogmatic controversies of his day, and distinguished himself in some way by his defence of the unity of the Godhead.

Bull., 1866,
p. 80.
R.S., ii. 303.

In Christ.

But though the unity of the Godhead was the fundamental doctrine of Christianity as opposed to the polytheistic worship of the Heathen, it was known to the faithful themselves, and even to the Pagans—witness the famous letter of Pliny—that they also worshipped Christ as God. Hence they wrote also

on their inscriptions, "In the name of Christ," "In God the Lord Christ," or "In God Christ." And in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, which was more immediately under the supervision of the Bishop, they wrote with a closer adherence to the orthodox formularies of faith, and, indeed, the very words of all the ancient creeds, "In God and in Christ." The omission of the conjunction might, under critical circumstances, have given just cause of offence and suspicion of unsoundness in the faith, as giving countenance to the heresy of Noetus and the Patripassians. There could be no such apprehension as to the Catholic faith of the writers of the following epitaphs, all of which come from the cemetery of the Popes themselves :—

AUGURINE IN DOM ET P

R.S., ii. xxxix.
30; xxvii. 52.

PAX DOM ET P

CUM FAUSTIN[O] ATTICO

FENECCI

xlvi. 52.
xliii. 39.

CTINA H EN ΘΕΩ ΚΑΙ ΧΡΙΣΤΩ ΠΙΣΤΕΥΣΑΣ
C TOIC ANTEAOIC

It is much to be regretted that only a fragment of the last epitaph should have reached us. Enough, however, is preserved to show that Faustina was one who believed in God and Christ; and in the two others there is the same distinct enumeration of the two First Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

Occasionally the early Christians wrote D.M. P S., as though they would Christianise the ordinary Pagan form of dedication to the *Di Manes* by introducing into it the name of Christ. This formula may be read as equivalent to either *Domino Christo Sacrum*, according to the ancient practice of writing the initials of syllables,¹ or to *Deo Magno Christo Sacrum*, or more probably *Deo Magno Christo Salvatori*, according to the words of St. Paul in his Epistle to Titus,² where he speaks of "the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Then, again, they often placed the word ΙΧΘΥΣ at the beginning or end of their epitaphs, not as part of a sentence,

¹ See p. 95.

² Chap. ii. 13.

but as a complete formula in itself; and our readers need not be told how this was equivalent to a declaration of faith in "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour." We have given an example of this kind of inscription in No. 2 of our selection in page 80, and other examples may be seen both in the Lateran and Kircherian Museums in Rome. One in the latter collection has a remarkable variation of the formula, too significant to be passed over in silence. The epitaph in question was found in our own time in the ancient Cemetery of the Vatican, and belongs to the end of the second or beginning of the third century. It is ornamented at the top by a wreath; then follow the letters D.M., and in the next line IXΘYC ZONTΩN. Below this are two fishes, one on either side of an anchor, followed by an inscription which is unhappily incomplete.

Bull., 1870,
p. 50.

LICINIÆ AMIATI BENE
MERENTI VIXIT

But it is clear that the phrase *ἰχθύς ζώντων* stood alone, as the *ἰχθύς* does in other epitaphs; and when we call to mind the hidden meaning of the word taken alone, we can only understand "*Fish of the living*," inscribed on a memorial of the dead, as having reference to those words of our Lord, "He that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live; every one that believeth in Me shall not die for ever," for "God is not the God of the dead but of the living."¹

and in the
Holy Ghost.

Nor is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity absent from these epitaphs. If we read on some stones "In Christ" or "In the name of Christ," we read on another (in the Kircherian Museum), "In the Holy Spirit of God." ΠΡΩΤΟΣ ΕΝ ΑΓΙΩ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ ΘΕΟΤ ΕΝΘΑΔΕ ΚΕΙΤΑΙ ΦΙΡΜΙΛΛΑ ΑΔΕΛΦΗ ΜΝΗΜΗΣ ΧΑΡΙΝ. "Protus, in the Holy Spirit of God, is buried here. His sister Firmilla [set this up] for remembrance' sake." As the survivors prayed for their deceased relatives that they might live "in God," or "in Christ," "in God Christ," or "in

¹ St. John, xi. 25, 26; St. Matt. xxii. 32.

the Lord Jesus," so also they sometimes prayed, "Mayest thou live in the Holy Spirit: *Car Kuriaco Fil dulcissimo Vibas (i)n Spirito san.*¹ The same formula probably occurs in another epitaph also, though its present fragmentary condition does not allow us to speak with certainty.

PAULUS EVOCHIATI
[IN] SPIRITO SANCTO

The Holy Spirit is also mentioned in an epitaph of the end of the second century, which has been already quoted, in which God is said to have recalled to Himself the soul of a girl about ten years old, *Spiritu sancto suo castam pudicam et inviolabilem semper*—i.e., that had always been kept chaste, modest, and inviolate through the influence of His Holy Spirit. And De Rossi illustrates this by another, which was dug up near the Via Latina some twenty years ago. Several of its phrases savour of great antiquity, and in fact he himself calls it *antiquissima*.

ΙΟΥΛΕΙΑΣ ΕΤΑΡΕΣΤΑΣ
ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΦΙΛΕΣΤΑΤΗΣ
Η ΣΑΡΞ ΕΝΘΑΔΕ ΚΕΙΤΑΙ
ΨΥΧΗ ΔΕ ΑΝΑΚΑΙΝΘΕΙΣΑ
ΤΩ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ
ΚΑΙ ΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΝ ΣΩΜΑ
ΛΑΒΟΥΣΑ ΕΙΣ ΟΥΡΑΝΙΟΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ
ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΝ ΜΕΤΑ ΤΩΝ
ΑΓΙΩΝ ΑΝΕΛΗΦΘΗ

I.C., cxvi.

"The flesh of Julia Evaresta lies here, but her soul, renewed by the Spirit of Christ, and having received an angelical body, has been taken up into the heavenly kingdom of Christ with the saints."

In an epitaph of the very beginning of the fourth century, or even earlier still, an epitaph to the memory of a Bishop in Calabria begins with the mention of all three Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

IN D. D. ET SPIRITO SANTO, JULIANO EPP.

Bull., 1873, p.
129; 1876, p. 92.

i.e., "in God, the Lord," (which is, of course, the special title of

¹ See Nos. 1, 7, and 10 in p. 80.

J.C., No. 523.

Christ), "and the Holy Spirit." In another the Holy Trinity is spoken of under this very name; but this is a century later, A.D. 403. Unfortunately the stone is broken, so that the epitaph is incomplete. We only know that it was set up to the memory of one Quinctilian, who is called "a man of God," and of whom it is said that he loved chastity and despised the world (*amans castitatem, respuens mundum*); and the line before this begins with the words *confirmans Trinitatem*, whatever those words may mean.

Peculiar
phrases with
reference to
the Holy
Trinity.

Marangoni thought that he had discovered in 1742 an heretical formula with reference to the Blessed Trinity in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus. The formula was inscribed on a figure of our Lord, who was represented in the mosaic vaulting of an arcosolium, sitting on a globe as Lord of the world, with St. Peter and St. Paul on either side; and it ran in this wise—*Qui et Filius diceris et Pater inveniris*. To say of our Blessed Lord that, though called the Son, He is found in fact to be no other than the Father, is of course a distinctly heretical proposition; but the inscription does not come from the Cemetery of Callixtus, the real site of which was not at that time known, but from a cemetery of Sabellian heretics into which Marangoni had un-



Bull., 1866, p. 86. wittingly penetrated near Tor Marancia. Another inscription found in a cemetery on the Via Latina might perhaps be sus-

pected of favouring the same heresy. It is, of course, possible to explain the words *Deo Sanc* & *Uni* in an orthodox sense, but it is not the ordinary language of Christian epigraphy, and it reminds us of an epitaph already referred to, *Qui unu Deu credidit*. Perhaps it is worth observing that on this last-named epitaph the words *in pace* are repeated three times in a most unusual way, as though the writer had been especially anxious to insist upon the orthodoxy of the deceased, and to assert that he had died in the communion of the Church. If these inscriptions had been of earlier date, we should have been disposed to suspect some secret reference to the Sabellian controversy in the days of St. Callixtus, and that they belonged to men who had taken a prominent part in vindicating at that time the doctrine of the monarchy of the First Person of the Holy Trinity. More probably, however, they are of the fourth century, and refer to some later phase of the controversy.

An inscription found in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus in 1865 *Bull.*, 1865, p. 11. uses a term to express the object of Christian worship which entitles it to special mention in this place. The first two lines of the inscription only record that it was set up by a husband to the memory of his wife (*Birginia suæ*), and then it continues :—

QUOD SUMMITAS DEDIT ASIGNABIT
BENEMERENTI IN PACE

The interpretation of these words is not easy, especially as from the interchange of the letters *b* and *v* in *Birginia* one cannot be sure whether the verb should be read in the future tense or in the perfect. In the former case, perhaps it should be interpreted as an expression of faith in the resurrection, that God will restore to her at some future day the life which He had given her ; in the latter, the meaning is more obvious ; it becomes an acknowledgment of the Divine decrees and of resignation to them ; that the length of life given to his wife was

assigned to her by God. But in either case, *Summitas* seems clearly to be used here for God; and De Rossi quotes in illustration of it a sentence of Arnobius, who (he says) lived about the same time as this inscription was written, and who speaks of God as having in Himself the height of all perfections (*summitatem omnium summorum obtinens*).¹

This will be the most suitable place also in which to introduce another epitaph, differing in many respects from the general type of those we have seen. It was found in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, near the crypt in which St. Cecilia was buried, and marked the grave of some members of a noble family that was probably connected with her own. Hence the conjectural supplement to the mutilated third name. De Rossi considers it certain that it belongs to the beginning of the third century, though it has some characteristics of an earlier period.

N.S., ii. 116;
xxxv. 2.

ΦΡΟΝΤΩΝ

ΣΕΠΤΙΜΙΟΣ ΠΡΑΙΤΕΞΤΑΤΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΙΛΙΑΝΟΣ?
Ο ΔΟΥΛΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ ΑΞΙΩΣ ΒΙΩΣΑΣ
ΟΤ ΜΕΤΕΝΟΗCΑ ΚΑΝ ΩΔΕ ΟΙ ΤΗΡΕCΤΗCΑ
ΚΑΙ ΕΥΚΑΡΙCΤΗCΩ ΤΩ ΟΝΟΜΑΤΙ ΟΤΟΥ ΠΑΡΕΔΩΚΕ
ΤΗΝ ΨΥΧΗΝ ΤΩ ΘΕΩ ΤΡΙΑΝΤΑ ΤΡΙΩΝ ΕΤΩΝ
ΕΞ ΜΗΝΩΝ

"Septimius Prætextatus Cæcilianus, servant of God, who has led a worthy life. If I have served Thee [O Lord], I have not repented, and I will give thanks to Thy name. He gave up his soul to God (at the age of) thirty-three years and six months."

It is not worth while to point out the errors of orthography in this inscription; but the reader will observe the confusion of persons (which is not uncommon in these monuments), the first and last portions being spoken of the deceased by his surviving friend Fronto, who either wrote or carved the inscription, and the intermediate portion being put into the mouth of the deceased himself.

¹ Disput. adv. Gentes., lib. i.

Next after God, it follows naturally to speak of the angels. The angels. But there is hardly any mention of these in ancient Christian epigraphy. Once they appear in their proper character as God's messengers, the dead being said to have been "fetched by the angels;" and once they are named in some other relation, which, however, the mutilated condition of the tablet—*R.S., ii. xliii. 39.* one of those which have been already quoted, to the memory of one who "believed in God and in Christ"—unfortunately prevents us from recognising.

To the martyrs there is (as might have been expected) far more frequent reference. The title itself was inscribed on the tombs of some of those to whom it belonged, not only in the later and honorary inscriptions by Pope Damasus, but also on the original and contemporary tombstones.



On the tombstone of his predecessor, St. Fabian, the title would seem to have been added after the stone had been fixed in its place, and therefore it is not cut nearly so deep as the other parts of the inscription.



Probably it was necessary to wait for the sanction of the highest authority before it was allowable to give this title to a man;

and after the death of Fabian, the Holy See had remained vacant for eighteen months. The title is found also on another inscription, taken in the year 1845 from the Catacomb of St. Hermes.

DP. III IDUS SEPTEBR YACINTHUS MARTYR

Burial near
them much
desired.

In the third and fourth centuries the Christians were eager to be buried as near as possible to the tombs of the martyrs, and this desire was prompted by the hope that they would thereby gain an additional interest in their prayers.

KATEΘAIMHN EZ TO AGEION MAPTTPI(O)N

"I buried him at the holy confession (or tomb of the martyrs)."

Parentibus suis tabulam posuit ad sancta martura," "She set up the monument to her parents near the holy martyr [St. Agnes]" is the record of one who had buried them in the cemetery of that saint. *Retro sanctos, ad sanctum Cornelium, ad Ippolitum, ad dominum Gaium, ad sanctam Felicitatem,* are more detailed expressions of the same kind which occur on several epitaphs in the Catacombs; and the theological sense and justification of the practice may be read in the famous treatise of St. Augustine, "*De curâ pro mortuis gerendâ.*"

Martyrs in-
voked.

I.R.N., 6736.

Sometimes a direct appeal to the martyr was added on the inscription, asking for his or her protection for the deceased; as in an epitaph from the Catacombs now in the Museum at Naples, which ends with a prayer that St. Laurence will receive the departed soul SANCTE LAURENTI, SUSCEPTA(m h)ABETO ANIMA(m ejus). Another from the same source, now in the private museum of the Marchese del Bagno at Cusercoli, has been already quoted (in pages 25 and 90), in which all the saints are called upon in similar language.

L.M., ix. 32.

In the Cemetery of St. Hippolytus, Bosio read REFRIGERI TIBI DOMNUS IPOLITUS, just as we may read to-day in the mortar round a grave near the tomb of St. Januarius in the Catacomb of Prætextatus, REFRIGERI JANUARIUS AGATOPUS FELICISSIM MARTYRES. In the Cemetery of Basilla, also known

by the name of St. Hermes, on the old Via Salaria, Bosio found the fragment of an inscription on marble, in which a man named Serenus calls upon God ET BEATA BASILLA UT VOBIS, &c. Other epitaphs have been found in the same cemetery during ^{viii. 16, 17.} the last century, and may now be seen among the inscriptions in the Lateran Museum, and in our own selection from them (Nos. 4 and 5), in one of which the parents recommend their daughter Crescentina to St. Basilla, and in the other a mother recommends her son to the same powerful protection.

If the day of death or burial happened to coincide with the martyr's festival, this too was urged as a plea, or recorded as a pledge of special favour and protection. We find this sentiment openly expressed in an old Christian inscription in France, now preserved in the Museum at Carpentras, wherein a widow claims for her husband the intercession of St. Baudelius, the famous martyr of Nîmes, *per passionis die(m)*; *i.e.*, because he had died either on the day of that saint's martyrdom or (unless the Martyrologies are in error) the day following. Her husband had died XII. KAL JUNIAS. SED MARTYR BAUDELIUS PER PAS- ^{L.B., ii. 596.} SIONIS DIE DNO DULCEM SUUM COMMENDAT ALUMNUM. In the epitaphs of the Catacombs there are a few chronological notices of the same kind, which, though not so explicit, yet can only be understood in the same sense:—

PECORI DULCIS ANIMA BENIT IN CIMITERO VII. IDUS ^{L.M., viii. 25.}
JUL. DP. POSTERA DIE MARTURORUM.

“Pecoris, a sweet soul, came into the cemetery on the 9th of July; buried the next day to the Feast of the Martyrs,”

i.e., of the seven sons of Felicitas, who were thus spoken of in Rome as the martyrs *par excellence*.

ANTE NATALE DOMNI ASTERI(i) DEPOSITUS IN PACE
“Before the Feast of St. Asterius, buried in peace.” ^{I.C., p. 212.}

IN NATALE DOMNES SITIRETIS TERTIUM IDUS FEBB.

“On the 11th of February, the Feast of St. Soteris (A.D. 401).”

As the holy confessors and martyrs were allowed during life to plead their own sufferings in mitigation of some portion of

the canonical penance inflicted by the discipline of those days upon others who had fallen away in time of persecution, so it was only natural that, as the anniversary of their passion came round, an appeal should be made to them in heaven to use their powers of intercession on behalf of their *alumni*, just now gone to judgment. For this was the relation in which the faithful considered themselves to stand towards the martyrs whom they invoked, as clients towards patrons. "Farewell, dearest son," are the words which the poet Prudentius puts into the mouth of a mother giving up her son to martyrdom,— "Farewell, and when you have entered into Christ's kingdom, remember your mother, then my patron, though now only my son" (*jam patrone ex filio*).¹ *Sancti Petre Marcelline suscipite*

Bull., 1875, p. 29. *vestrum alumnum*, said an epitaph of the fifth century in the cemetery where those saints were buried.

It is in this sense that we must understand an inscription from the Catacombs which says of a child who died at the age of ten years, that he had been "brought up for God, Christ, and the martyrs" (*Nutricatus Deo Cristo Marturibus*). Both Prudentius and St. Paulinus of Nola bear testimony to the practice to which this inscription seems to refer, viz., of vowing or consecrating children from their tenderest age to the service of God at the shrines of the martyrs. Ancient medals also have been found representing the ceremony of this consecration at the shrine of St. Laurence. An epitaph from Ostia placed in Column I. of the Lateran collection, and belonging either to Anicius Auchenius Bassus, who was Consul A.D. 408, or to his son, who filled the same office twenty years later, and to his wife and family, says of them all that they were *Deo sanctisque devoti*; and the inscriptions on offerings made to various altars or churches about the same date ran in the same form—*De donis Dei et Sanctorum*; *de donis Dei et Sanctæ Mariæ, S. Petri*, &c. De Rossi calls attention to the unguarded simplicity of this language, as though those who used it were at no

¹ Prudent. *Peristeph.*, x. 813.

pains to express any distinction between God and the saints, because it was known to everybody, and there was no possible danger of scandal through any suspicion that it had been lost sight of. In mediæval and modern times men would not have dared to use the same concise language ; from the year 1000 the approved mode of expressing the same truth would have been rather in this form : *Deo ad honorem sanctorum martyrum*. Perhaps some such distinction is virtually expressed in an epitaph to be seen in the column we are still engaged with, wherein it is said of one Mandrosa that she was faithful (or a viii. 20. believer) in Christ, keeping His commandments, *et martyrum obsequiis devota*.

The martyrs were thus honoured and revered as the special friends of God ; and men had confidence in the efficacy of their prayers, because they knew that they were now in His presence, and enjoying a participation in His own everlasting life ; as we read in another of these epitaphs, which, however, did not belong to a martyr, but only to one of the faithful :—

GENTIANUS FIDELIS IN PACE QUI VIX

viii. 15.

IT ANNIS XXI. MENSS VIII. DIES

XVI. ET IN ORATIONIS TUIS

ROGES PRO NOBIS QUIA SCIMUS TE IN P

“Gentianus, one of the faithful, in peace, who lived twenty-one years eight months and sixteen days. And in your prayers pray for us, because we know you [to be] in Christ.”

CHAPTER VII.

THEIR TESTIMONY TO CERTAIN POINTS OF DISCIPLINE
AND PRACTICE.

Evidence from the inscriptions of the Catacombs to—(1.) The hierarchy, pope, bishop, priest, deacon, exorcist, lector, fossor, or ostiarius—(2.) Widows and virgins—(3.) The laity, fideles, fratres, neophytes, catechumens—(4.) The sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and Holy Eucharist.

Testimony
from the Cata-
combs to other
subjects.

IN the present chapter we propose to mention a few other subjects, connected more or less closely with Christian doctrine, upon which some light may be thrown by a careful examination of the inscriptions from the Catacombs; such as the hierarchy of the Church, the different ranks or classes, both of its clergy and laity; its sacraments, and perhaps some minor points of doctrine or discipline.

(1.) The
hierarchy.

Of the hierarchy, we could almost reconstruct its several degrees from the monuments of ancient Christianity which still remain in the Catacombs. Originally, indeed, it seems probable that even bishops were buried without any title of their office being added to the name engraved on the tombstone; at least if De Rossi and others are correct in referring to the successor of St. Peter a sarcophagus which was found near the "Confession" of that Apostle early in the seventeenth century, with the name LINUS upon it, and nothing more.

Bull., 1864,
p. 50.

Anyhow, it is certain that the terminology by which the different orders were distinguished was not from the beginning solemnly and irrevocably determined. The word *episcopus*, for example, had been in use among the Greeks, sometimes as the title of a commissioner appointed to regulate the affairs of a

new colony, sometimes for the president of the public games and athletic sports, sometimes also for the *magister* of the clubs or *sodalitia* which were so numerous amongst them.¹ Nevertheless it is certain that this word was in common use among Christians as a recognised ecclesiastical title long before the practice of burial in the Catacombs was discontinued. Thus the contracted forms, ΕΠΙ, ΕΠΙC, or ΕΡ, have been found upon the tombstones of Anteros, Fabian, Eutychianus, and Cornelius, all bishops of Rome during the third century. We have seen that of Cornelius in p. 105, and facsimiles of the others are given in the next page.

Even the title of *papa* was used as an ecclesiastical title before the end of the fourth century.

A fragment of an inscription which came to light in 1876 in the course of the excavations for the modern cemetery at San Lorenzo *fuori le mura* consists of these letters:—

RA
A CUMPAVIT
ONUS SE BIBO
E PAPA LIBERIO

The first two lines tell us of some deacon or some person whose name ended in *onus* having bought a grave for himself, and the engraver having made a blunder in one of his words, supplied the omission by inserting the two letters in smaller type above the line. The interest of the inscription is centred, of course, in the mention of Pope Liberius in the last line, and the question is, What word is to be supplied before *papa*? It must be some word in the ablative case ending in *e*, and De Rossi says that, according to the analogy of other tombstones, only two can be suggested, *concedente* or *sedente*. In support of the former there might be quoted from his own volume of dated inscriptions a grave *concessus a Papa Hormisda*, and another *concessus a beatissimo Papa Joanne*. But these belong to the sixth century and to the Vatican Basilica. In an earlier

¹ See Aristoph., Aves, 1022; O. H., 4024; Spon, Misc. Antiq., xx. 3.



age we have only evidence of the Pope exercising immediate jurisdiction over the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, and even at the time when Popes Hormisdas and John were granting places of burial in the Vatican, we have proof that a similar privilege was conceded at San Lorenzo, not by the Pope, but by the Provost of the church, *Præpositus*. Moreover, the present inscription does not record a gratuitous concession, but a purchase. De Rossi concludes, therefore, that the missing word must have been *sedente*, and he continues as follows :—" Amid so many thousands of Christian sepulchral inscriptions in Rome belonging to the first six centuries, I only knew of two examples up to the present day in which the name of the Pope was made, thus to take the place of the Consul's. I say in sepulchral inscriptions, because in sacred or historical inscriptions in basilicas, and every kind of votive and religious dedication, *salvo episcopo* was the accustomed and legitimate formula" (corresponding to the Pagan chronological formula, *Salvis Augustis nostris*). "Now of the two examples, one belonged to Damasus, SUB DAMASO EPISCO, and the other was precisely Liberius. This last, however, was found in a mutilated condition, SUB LIBE, and the example of the other inscription suggested to me to supply SUB LIBERIO EPISCOPO. And I went on to make this further remark, that both of the Roman Pontiffs whose names had been thus singularly used had had to contend with schism. The election of Damasus had been disturbed by the competition of Ursicinus ; and when Liberius was exiled for the faith, Constantius tried to make the much controverted Felix first his substitute, and then his colleague. The Roman people, however, cried out with loud shouts, 'One God, one Christ, one bishop,'¹ and remained faithful to Liberius. Hence the singular formulæ under discussion are not to be taken as chronological dates so much as protestations of obedience to the legitimate pastor of the Church. And now to-day we find a third monument, containing another formula

¹ Theodoret, Hist. Eccl., ii. 17.

of the same kind with reference to Liberius, and its peculiarity confirms the view I have taken, that it has reference not to the mere fact of Liberius's pontificate generically, but to the tempestuous circumstances of the time under which both the Roman Senate and people, remaining faithful to Liberius, protested against the intrusion of Felix, and rising up, drove him out of the city.¹ This devotion of the Catholic flock to Liberius, returned from exile, is a point of considerable historical importance; it is a strong argument in his favour in the controversy which has been so warmly agitated as to his constancy in the faith for which he was persecuted and banished. All monuments, therefore, which allude to this devotion and obedience of the people have a notable value, and should be carefully weighed by those who make a special study of the controversies of ecclesiastical history."

But this monument has yet another value. The word *pope* is employed here absolutely as expressive of an office or dignity; it is not an expression of mere filial affection on the part of the flock towards their shepherd, as it is when we find it used with the addition of a personal pronoun, "our pope," or "his pope"—*e.g.*, in an epitaph (quoted in page 46) of the end of the third century, a deacon says that he had made a chamber in the Catacombs with the consent of his Pope Marcellinus (*jussu Papæ sui Marcellini*). Here *papa* is used in its old and ordinary sense as patron or father, as it is used also in some of the Acts of the Martyrs—*e.g.*, St. Perpetua says to the Bishop Optatus, "You are our *papa*;" and on another occasion the Pagan judges begin their examination of a priest who is brought before them with this question, "You are Antony, whom they call their *papa*."² But here the title is given to Liberius, and in an epitaph of Furius Dionysius Filocalus, found in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, it is given to his successor Damasus, without

R.S., ii., p. 200.

Bull., 1873,
p. 160

¹ Marcellini et Faustini, Libellus Precum, Præf., Sismondi, Opp., t. i.

² Ruinart, Acta Sincera, ed. Paris, p. 92; Mabillon, Analecta, t. iv. p. 104.

the addition of any qualifying adjective.¹ The Roman clergy wrote of St. Cyprian ² as *benedictum papam Cyprianum*, and we know from the letters of St. Augustin and St. Jerome, and the poems of Prudentius,³ that the title was common to all bishops; but Sismondi has shown that, at least from the fifth century, it was given in a special manner to the Bishops of Rome; and the monuments we have now seen prove that this practice had begun at a still earlier period. Not only is Damasus called Pope Damasus on a public monument, but the same title is given to his predecessor even on a common tombstone; and not on one only, for we have recently recovered from the Cemetery of St. Callixtus the missing fragment of the other inscription that has been spoken of, SUB LIBE, and we find that the supplement suggested (*episcopo*) was incorrect; the inscription really ran thus: SUB LIBERIO PAPA. These two notices of "Pope Liberius" from different cemeteries—to which we shall presently add a third from Spoleto—show that the use of the title in an absolute way was familiar to the Christians of Rome from the middle of the fourth century. In like manner, there is evidence that in the East, as early as the days of Arius, there was a tendency to apply the same title to the Bishops of Alexandria in a special way, as distinguished from the bishops of less important sees in the patriarchate. Even in Rome, however, as we learn from paintings still to be seen in the Catacombs, it was not unusual to add ROMANUS after PP, or PAPA, as late as the ninth century.

Pope Damasus himself, when he had occasion in his histori-

¹ In the imperfect copy of this well-known monument in the crypt of St. Eusebius—the restoration in the sixth or seventh century of the original by Pope Damasus—we read *Damasis Pappæ cultor atque amator*. De Rossi, following the example of the monument of Severus, which speaks of *Papæ sui Marcellini*, supposed that Filocalus had written in the same style, *Damasi Papæ sui*. Subsequently, however, another fragment of the original stone has been recovered, which shows that the *s* was one of the many blunders of the ignorant "restorer"—the fragment gives us *s, i, p* in succession, showing that *papæ* followed the name of Damasus immediately.

² Ep. viii., inter Cyprianicas.

³ Peristeph., xi. 127.

Or Rector.

cal monuments to name any of his predecessors, almost always gave them the title of RECTOR, or ruler. Once in the inscription in the Papal crypt he calls one of them (Melchiades) SACERDOS. He is himself also called RECTOR in an inscription put up to the honour of SS. Felix and Adauctus by a priest named Verus, at his bidding.

L.M., iii. 2.

PRESBYTER HIS VERUS, DAMASO RECTORE JUBENTE,
COMPOSUIT TITULUM SANCTORUM LIMINA ADORNANS.

Priest.

R.S.I., xix. 5.

The few sepulchral fragments which remained in the single area of the crypt of Lucina, when it was rediscovered by De Rossi, gave no less than three memorials of priests, of which the most recent is of a certain Maximus, whom he believes to be the celebrated confessor of the year 250. The name of the

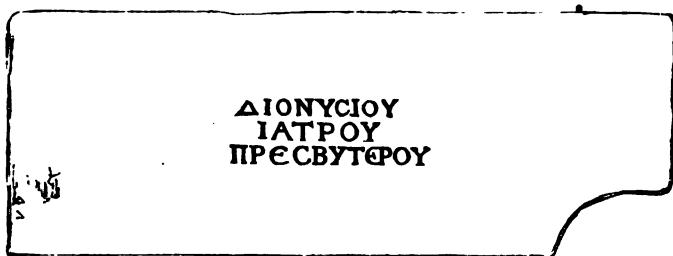


most ancient is lost ; there only remains the abbreviation ΠΡ, written in very beautiful letters, and belonging to the oldest part of the cemetery. On the whole, De Rossi does not hesitate to assign it to the second century. Neither is it possible to assign a later date to one which has been recovered from the Coemeterium Ostrianum, which has all the characteristics of that same ancient and simple style of which we have already seen several specimens in page 33. Like the other examples, it presents us the title of *presbyter*, only in an abbreviated form.

AVR. HELIODORVS. P R T.

In the next example the word is given at full length. It is of the first half of the third century, and it appears that the man to whom it was set up (Dionysius) was a physician as well as a priest. Perhaps the same advantages were derived from the

union of these two characters in those days as are experienced in the present day by zealous missionaries of the faith in China and some other heathen countries.



Several other epitaphs of more recent date, yet still very ancient, may be seen in Column X. of the Lateran, in the walls of the staircase by which we descend to the Basilica of St. Agnes, and yet more abundantly in books. *Presbyter* is the word uniformly used, and some of the epitaphs make mention of their wives also as being buried with them—*e.g.*, of the year 389 in the cloisters of St. Paul's, *Gaudentius presb. sibi et conjugi suæ Severæ sanctæ ac sanctissimæ feminae, &c.*

The deacon Severus also, at the end of the third century, Deacon. would seem to have been married, for he made a double vault in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, with the leave of "his Pope," Marcellinus, and he says that he made it as a quiet resting-place for himself and those who belonged to him (*sibi suisque*); and then there follows immediately on the same stone the remarkable epitaph which we have already had occasion to quote (page 46), to the memory of a child of ten years old, who was probably his daughter. And there is an epitaph in the Lateran Museum by one Felix a deacon to his wife Aurelia, *Verecundæ, pudicæ, totiusque integritatis feminae*. The deacons occupied a very important position in the administrative department of the Church, and especially of the cemeteries, in the second and third centuries. Possibly one of them is designated in an epitaph of the Lateran under the title *Ministrator Christianus*. A handsome vault in the Cemetery of St. Callix-

R.S.I, xix. 9.

xv. 10.

x. 20.

R.S., iii. pp.
236-242.

tus would almost seem to have been appropriated for their burial, as the Papal crypt was for the burial of the bishops.

Subdeacon.

Of a subdeacon the most ancient monument with which we are acquainted was found in the Cemetery of St. Alexander, about seven miles from Rome, on the Via Nomentana; but it is somewhat too late to allow of its being quoted here, as it

I.C., No. 743.

Acolyte.

belongs to the year 448. And in like manner, of an acolyte, we do not know of any which falls strictly within our limits. The earliest we have seen was once in the pavement of the Church of St. Vitalis, to which title he belonged. He is called *Acol. Reg. Quarte. TT. Vestina*; and he was buried on the 8th October (*P[ostero] D[ie] Nat. Sti. Marci*), at the age of thirty. Another came to light recently under the pavement of the old Basilica of St. Lorenzo *fuori le mura*; it was inscribed *LOCUS ROMANI ACOLITI*, and belongs (according to De Rossi) either to the fourth or fifth century. The existence, however, of both these grades of the hierarchy during the period with which we are concerned is attested by a letter addressed to St. Cyprian by those who were condemned to the mines, who write to thank him for his ministrations to the relief of their temporal necessities, which (they say) he had sent to be distributed "by Herennianus the subdeacon (*hypodiaconus*), and Lucianus, Maximus, and Amantius, acolytes."¹ There is also the letter of Pope Cornelius (A.D. 250) to the Bishop of Antioch, in which he enumerates the staff of clergy in Rome as containing "forty-six priests, seven deacons, seven subdeacons, forty-two acolytes, and exorcists, lectors, and *ostiarii*, taken all together, fifty-two."²

Bull., 1863,
p. 16.

De Rossi considers it certain that there must be some error with reference to this last numeral. We can easily understand the paucity of the deacons and subdeacons; neither should we have been surprised at finding only a small number of exorcists;

R.S., iii. p. 536.

but he thinks that there must have been at least as many lectors

¹ Ep. lxxvii.

² Euseb. H. E., vi. 43. See Epist. Rom. Pont. ed. Coustant, p. 149.

as acolytes, since their duties obliged them to assist at the solemn reunions of the faithful for the divine offices; neither can there have been fewer doorkeepers than there were *tituli* or parishes, and there were certainly twenty-five at this time. On the whole, therefore, he believes that a numeral must have been dropped out of the text, and that we ought to read either 152, or even 252.

However, be this as it may, there are many monuments Exorcist. of the other orders, both of lectors and exorcists. On a tombstone still lying in its place on the floor of one of the galleries of St. Callixtus we read PAULUS EXORCISTA DEPOSITUS MAR- R.S., i. xxxvii. 1 TYRIES—*i.e.*, buried near the martyrs (*ad martyres*); and 28. Bull., 1868, p. 11. another from the same source, of the fourth century, has CELERI EXORC. CUM COMPARE SUA IN PACE. A third stone, from a catacomb on the other side of Rome, now preserved in the Lateran, x 13. exhibits PRIMUS EXORCISTA FECIT. And we must make room for yet another, though it does not belong to Rome, but to the north of Italy; neither are we able to define its age very precisely. Both Mommsen and De Rossi are satisfied as to its C.I.L., v. 4846. authenticity; and the latter author tells us that most modern authors assign it to the fourth century, though their prede- Bull., 1876, p. 91. cessors had thought it was earlier. Flavius Latinus, whose monument it is, was Bishop of Brescia; and the remarkable thing is, that his granddaughter, who set it up, should have thought it worth while to commemorate not only how long he was bishop and priest, but also how long he was exorcist.

FL·LATINO·EPISCOPO·ANN·III·M·VII·PRÆS
AN·XV·EXORC·AN·XII·ET·LATINILLÆ·ET·FLA
MACRINO·LECTORI·FL·PAULINA·NEPTIS
B·M·M·P.

“To Flavius Latinus, who was bishop for three years seven months; priest for fifteen years; exorcist for twelve years; and to Latinilla, and to Flavius Macrinus, lector; Flavia Paulina, his granddaughter, put this up to his good memory (*bonæ memoriæ posuit*).”

Of lectors there are both more numerous and more ancient Lector. records. One is even found among those most ancient epi-

taphs of the Coemeterium Ostrianum which cannot be put later than the first half of the second century. It consists merely of the name (repeated twice, and corrected as the reader sees), the title, and the primitive symbol of the anchor.

Bull., 1871, p. 32.

v
FAVOR. FAOR (*anchor*) LECTOR

Another, bearing marks of the same primitive antiquity, is now preserved in the ducal palace at Urbino, and marked the tomb of a lector and his wife, CLAUDIUS ATTICIANUS LECTOR ET CLAUDIA FELICISSIMA CO(N)JUX. In later monuments of this class it is generally added to which of the titles, churches, or ecclesiastical divisions of the city they belong. One, *Regionis Secundæ*, is of the year 338; another, *de Pallacine*—i.e., of the church which is now called St. Mark's, A.D. 348; a third, *tituli Fasciolæ*, A.D. 377; and a fourth, *Leopardus Lector de Pudentianâ*—i.e., of the title of St. Pudens (*ecclesia Pudentiana*), A.D. 384. The age of the first of these was only nineteen, of the third forty-six, and of the last twenty-four.

I.C., Nos. 62,
164, and 388.
Bull., 1867, p. 51.

Fossor [or
ostiarus].

x. 21-33.

We find no distinct mention of *ostiaris*, or doorkeepers; but it seems extremely probable that their place was filled in those early days by the *fossores*, or diggers of the subterranean cemeteries, of whom there are most abundant memorials. We have seen that the *ostiaris* are mentioned among the classes of persons supported by the Roman Church in the days of Pope Cornelius—i.e., in the middle of the third century—and the *fossores* are not; and yet it is certain that they existed, and that their maintenance must have been provided for by the Church. On the other hand, in some other lists of the Roman clergy, made at a somewhat later period, the *fossores* are enumerated and the *ostiaris* are not. And a moment's reflection will satisfy us that the *fossores* must certainly have fulfilled all the most essential duties of the *ostiaris* as long as the holy mysteries were celebrated during the ages of persecution in the subterranean chambers of the Catacombs.

After enumerating the several grades of the clergy, our thoughts turn naturally to consecrated members of the other sex, virgins and widows—that is to say, women who from motives of religion abstained from marriage altogether, or at least from contracting it twice. Of both of these, distinct mention is made in the Epistles of St. Paul. The earliest Christian apologists too are unanimous in extolling the love of the faithful for the state of virginity and the continence of widows, so that it would have been strange if the ancient Christian epitaphs should not have borne some testimony to them.

First, we observe that the word *virgo* is often recorded in them, even where, from the age of the deceased, it would have seemed quite unnecessary. In estimating its significance, however, we must bear in mind the very early age at which Roman girls were married. Twelve was the age determined by law, and several inscriptions, both Pagan and Christian, testify that this age was far from being unknown in practice.

Hence the following inscriptions are not so unmeaning as they may at first sight appear. The first is of the year 295 :
STATILIA ALEXANDRA ANNORUM XIII. VIRGO MORTUA EST.
Another runs thus :—

BACCIS DULCIS ANIMA	PATER
IN PACAE DOMINI QUÆ	FILIÆ SU(Æ)
VIXI(T) ANNOS XV. VIRGO	DULCISSIMÆ
DIES LXX. PRIDIE CALENDAS DECE(M)BRES.	

R.S., iii. xxx. 47.

“Baccis, sweet soul, in the peace of the Lord ; who lived fifteen years and seventy days, a virgin. November 30th. Her father, to his sweetest daughter.”

Another belongs to the year 401 : PRETIOSA ANNORUM XII. TANTUM ANCILLA DEI ET CHRISTI. It is disputed whether any special dedication to religion is to be understood by this title of “Handmaid of God and of Christ.” At first sight we should have been disposed to think that some such meaning was tolerably certain ; on the other hand, we find Tertullian, in the opening of his second book on “Female Dress,” address-

Ancilla Dei et Christi.

ing those to whom he writes as "handmaids of the living God, my fellow-slaves (of Christ) and sisters ;" ¹ and yet it is clear that that work was not written for the use only of those whom we now call "religious." There can be less doubt, however, about the religious character of a lady aged twenty-eight, who is called "a virgin of God" on her epitaph, now to be seen in the Kircherian Museum: VICTORA BIRGO DEI QUI VIXIT ANNIS XXVIII IN PACE III. IDUS FEBR. It is worthy of remark that the title *Famulus Dei*, or servant of God, for which Scriptural authority might be quoted, ² and which is so common on the ancient inscriptions of Spain, does not often occur on the early Christian epitaphs of Rome. We have seen it once (in Greek) in our last chapter, but we hardly know another instance before the fifth century. The phrase *Homo Dei*, which probably was intended to mean much the same thing, is met with more than once in the Catacombs.

Famulus Dei.
L.B.I. 124.

Homo Dei.

But to return to the title of virgin. It is given to a stranger (*peregrina*), aged forty-one years, in No. 17 of our selection ; also, in No. 21, to a man aged twenty-three, of whom his parents record that he went out of this world "a virgin and a neophyte." De Rossi has met with another example in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, where the title is given to a man :—

R.S., ii. xlvii.
51.

PONTIUS ATENAGORAS QUI VIX. AN. XXII. VIRGO.

In the column at the Lateran, from which most of our specimens are taken, there are other examples of neophyte virgins—*e.g.*, Nos. 27 and 28 ; and the first of these had only just completed her ninth year. Indeed, those who are called virgins are of very various ages. No. 1 is a lady aged thirty-five, "more or less ;" No. 5, "a virgin, a girl of seventeen ;" No. 6, "a faithful virgin," of the same age.

¹ See also De Uxore, ii. 6 ; but in De Virg. Vel., c. 3, we have *Christi solius ancillæ* spoken of virgins.

² Rom. i. 1 ; Acts xvi. 17.

At No. 7 we find a man named Parthenius, whose name ^{*Virginus or Virginia.*} reminds us of the Latin version of the same name continually given on Christian epitaphs both to husbands and wives—Virginus or Virginia. It may even be found on a few Pagan epitaphs. It refers, of course, to their condition before marriage, and means that they had never been married before.

An inscription of the year 291 runs in this wise :—

EX VIRGINIO TUO BEN
E MECO VIXISTI LIB ENIC
ONJUGA INNOCENTISSI
MA CERVONIA SILVANA
REFRIGERA CUM SPIRITA
SANCTA DEP KAL APR TIBERI
ANO II ET DIONI COSS.

I.C., i. p. 23.

Perhaps the three first words of this inscription ought to be taken separately from what follows, and be understood as merely stating who set up this memorial ; “from your husband.” Or they may be taken as intended to be equivalent to the Scriptural account of the Prophetess Anna, “who had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity ;” and we may translate as follows :—

“Cervonia Silvana, most innocent wife, thou hast lived well and willingly (*libenter* ?) with me, thy husband, from thy virginity. Be refreshed with the holy souls. Buried on the 1st of April, A. D. 291.”

The high esteem in which chastity and continence were held in the Christian community is attested in another way by an epithet sometimes attached to the name of a wife on her tombstone, *μόναδος*, Univira, or Unibyra.

CEMIIPONIA ΓΤΗΗ CEMNH MONANΔΡΟC.

Univira.

“Sempronia, venerable lady, who never had but one husband.”

R.S., iii. xxii. 17.

The same feeling dictated the following at the end of an epitaph

xvii. 13.

in the Catacombs, now to be seen in the Lateran : TE IN PACE CUM VIRGINITATE TUA. The girl to whom this apostrophe is addressed was between fifteen and sixteen. Another epitaph, from the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, if we are to understand it strictly, goes a great deal further than this, for it affirms of a lady that she led a life of perfect continence, even in the married state, for five years : VIXIT INLIBATA CUM VIRGINIO SUO ANNOS V.

R.S., i. xxx. 13.

Widows.

xi. 2.

1 Tim. v. 9. 16.

Of the epitaphs of widows, the Lateran Museum contains two or three examples. In the first, the matron (Octavia) is called *Vidua Dei*; where the title "widow of God" must certainly mean some special consecration to the service of God in the condition of widowhood. St. Paul speaks of widows being "chosen," who were not less than threescore years of age, and who had not been married to more than one husband. If they had any relatives among the faithful, such relatives were bound to minister to their wants, "that the Church might not be charged (*gravetur*), and there may be sufficient for them that are widows indeed." And the reader will see in our selection (No. 19) the epitaph of one Daphne, a widow, who "as long as she lived never charged the Church" (*cum vixit, ecclesiam nihil gravavit*). A third epitaph, from the Catacomb of St. Saturninus, bears precisely the same testimony to another widow. The monument is put up by her daughter, who says that she had been the wife of one husband, that she "sat" a widow for sixty years, and lived to be upwards of eighty. The word "sat" has an official sound about it, but it was probably only meant to say that Regina had lived in the state of widowhood for that number of years, since we are expressly told that she never burdened the Church; and even if her circumstances had been different, she would not have been eligible, according to the rules of discipline laid down by St. Paul, until she was threescore years of age.

REGINE VENEMERENTI FILIA SUA FECIT
 VENE REGINE MATRI VIDUA QUE SE
 DIT VIDUA ANNOS LX. ET ECLESA
 NUNQUA GRAVAVIT UNIBYRAQUE
 VIXIT ANNOS LXXX. MESIS V.
 DIES XXVI.¹

"To the well-deserving Regina. Her daughter made this to her well-deserving mother, Regina, who sat a widow sixty years, and never burdened the Church, and never had but one husband. She lived eighty years five months and twenty-six days."

After these privileged classes, it follows to speak of the great (3.) The body of the faithful. This was their proper title, *πιστοὶ* or *fideles*. This is the word used both in Holy Scripture and in these ancient epitaphs. It was a title to which a man had no claim until he had been baptized. By that sacrament we receive the gift of faith, as the first question in the form of administering it still sufficiently indicates—"What dost thou seek from the Church of God?—Faith." Hence in these short inscriptions, and in other documents also of the same antiquity—*e.g.*, the letter of Pope Cornelius, quoted in an earlier part of this chapter—baptism is sometimes spoken of under the phrases *fidem accepit*, or *percepit*, or absolutely (the noun being understood) *percepit*, *consecuta est*. Or *fides* is put absolutely for baptism, as when Tertullian says that it is not allowed to contract a second marriage *post fidem*, or speaks of those who have fallen into grievous sin after baptism as *post fidem lapsi*.² In a monument of the year 268 the same truth is expressed in another form, "*gratiam accepit D.N.*," "received the grace of our Lord;" and the same also occurs in a Greek inscription. In another, a man is said to be *fide constitutus*, and the day of baptism is called the day of *acceptio* or *consecutio*.

(3.) The Laity.

The Faithful.

1 Tim. v. 16.

L.M., xi. 8-11.

Bull., 1869, p. 27.

I.C., No. 10, p. 16.

PERIT ANN. XXXV.

EX DIE ACCEPTIONES SUÆ VIXIT DIES LVII.

"She died at the age of thirty-five. From the day of her receipt (of baptism) she lived fifty-seven days."

¹ Marchi, Monumenti delle Arti Cristiane Primitive, p. 98.

² De Pudic., cc., 1 and 18.

CONSECUTUS EST IIL. NON. DECEMB. EX DIE CONSECVTIONIS
IN SÆCULO FUIT AD USQUE VII. IDUS DECEMB.

"He received [baptism] on the 3d of December, and from the day of his attainment of it, he remained in the world till the 7th of December."

The last inscription is taken from a Christian cemetery in Africa, not in Rome; but it was worth quoting for its exact conformity with the one which precedes it. In both alike there is the same distinction between the natural and the spiritual age of the deceased—*i.e.*, between his first and his second birth. After stating the number of years he had lived in the world, his age is computed afresh from the day of his regeneration, thus marking off the length of his spiritual from that of his merely natural life; as Tertullian tells us was the common habit of Christians; "our very life," he says, "is counted only from our baptism (*a fide etiam ipsa vita nostra censetur*;"¹ and the biographer of St. Cyprian in like manner says that "the deeds of the man of God ought not to be reckoned except from the date of his birth to God."

A very interesting Roman inscription tells us of a child not yet two years old, who was tenderly loved by his grandmother, and when she saw that he was taken for death, she begged from the Church that he should go out of this world as one of the faithful (*cum soldu [solide] amatus fuisset a majore sua et vidit hunc morti consti[tu]tum esse petivit de æclesia ut fidelis de seculo recessisset*). In an inscription of the year 382 we have the record of one of the "faithful," aged sixteen months. And here is another very much older, having about it, indeed, every mark of special antiquity, both in its language and its symbols (the fish and the anchor), which records the death of a child between two and three years old, who is stated to have been both one of the faithful himself and born of faithful parents.

¹ De Monog., c. xi.

ΠΙCΤΟC ΕΚ ΗΙC
ΤΩΝ ΖΩCΙΜΟC
ΕΝΘΑΔΕ ΚΕΙΜΕ
ΖΗCΑC·ΕΤΕCΙΝ
Β·ΜΗ·Α ΗΜΕ ΚΕ

L.M., xiv. 19.

"I lie here, Zosimus, faithful, and (born) of faithful (parents), having lived two years one month and twenty-five days."

In a long and curious inscription preserved in the Museum of the Louvre in Paris, a child (*infans dulcissima atque innocentissima*) is said to have been "born a Pagan on the 6th of March, and after eighteen months and twenty-two days complete, to have been made one of the faithful (*fidelis facta*) at eight o'clock in the evening, and to have died four hours afterwards. She died at one o'clock in the morning, on the 25th of September." This inscription does not belong to our subject geographically, for it came from the Christian cemetery of Catania in Sicily, but it may very properly be used by way of illustration, since it falls within our chronological limits as a monument of the fourth century. Bull., 1868, p. 75. I.C., i. xi.

Another title by which the faithful were habitually known *Fratres*. to one another, and (there is good reason to believe) to others also, was *fratres*, or brethren. It was hardly to be expected that this title should occur on the sepulchral inscriptions of the Catacombs, since it belonged to the whole community, and would be used only when there was occasion to speak of them in their collective capacity, whereas each individual would be described according to his position in the Church; according to his ecclesiastical office, if he held any, or according to his relation to the sacraments and communion of the Church, if he were a layman—*e.g.*, a catechumen, if he had died whilst under instruction, and before he had been admitted into the fold by baptism; a neophyte, if he died soon after receiving that holy sacrament; *fidelis*, if the white robes of his baptism had been laid aside, and he had lived and died in the enjoyment of all the rights and privileges of a Christian. Hence this last is the most common designation on the epitaphs; a

few monuments, however, of the early ages still remain on which the title of *fratres* occurs. We have seen one such already (p. 95), in which an appeal is made to the brethren to pray for a deceased lady. In the following, found by De Rossi in the Catacomb of St. Priscilla, and referred by him to an early part of the third century, "the brethren" ask peace

Bull., 1864, p. 12.

1869, p. 27.

from God for the deceased Leontius, LEONTI PAX A FRATRIBUS VALE; and on a third, from the Catacomb of St. Cyriaca, Boldetti read ULPIA VIVA SIS CUM FRATRIBUS TUIS ("Ulpia, mayest thou live with thy brethren"). We find in Greek at the end of an epitaph set up by a father and mother to their son, "who had well received the grace of God," ΕΙΡΗΝΗΝ ΕΧΕΤΕ ΑΔΕΛΦΟΙ, which we may almost render "Peace be with you, brethren."

Public monuments on which this title was used have been discovered in various places. One was dug up in the ruins of an old Roman town not far from Algiers, and records the grant of an area for a Christian cemetery and the erection of a small church. The donor salutes "the brethren," "born of the Holy Spirit with a pure and simple heart." In another monument found at the same spot the priest Victor states that "he made this place for all the brethren." At Cumenia in Phrygia, a pillar has been found bearing on one side an inscription to the memory of five sons who "at one and the same time purchased for themselves a share in life"—*i.e.*, in eternal life, probably by martyrdom; and on the other side, "All on the eastern side up to this point is common to the brethren"—ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝΔΕ ΤΟ ΗΘΟΝ ΚΟΙΝΟΝ ΤΩΝ ΑΔΕΛΦΩΝ. Others belong to Salone, to Heraclea in Pontus, and to other places; and the agreement of so many monuments in so many different localities seems to warrant the conclusion that this was the official title (so to speak) of the Christian community; that whereas the members of private religious or social bodies (especially of burial-clubs) among Pagans were called *sodales*, Christians were called *fratres*. There was indeed one Pagan

R.S., i. 106.

sodality into whose title this word entered, the *Fratres Arvales*, but this was because the story of their foundation supposed them to have succeeded to twelve real brothers, the sons of Acca Laurentia.¹ Sometimes also the officials of other *collegia* would call their members "brothers" by way of compliment and courtesy, just as the patrons and founders of such institutions were sometimes called Fathers or Mothers. But it was reserved for Christianity to create a real brotherhood among men of different ranks and races. It is only within the fold of the Church that "the rich and poor have really met one another,"² having all things common during life, and after death being laid to rest side by side in one common cemetery; or, as Minucius Felix expresses it, "we call ourselves brethren, because we are children of one parent, God; are partakers in one faith, and fellow-heirs of the same hope."

It has been already mentioned that persons newly baptized were called neophytes, *i.e.*, lately born, newly planted in Christ through the initiatory sacrament of His grace. The title occurs in Holy Scripture,³ and is often inscribed on the epitaphs. We have given two examples (Nos. 20 and 21) in our selection, and many more may be seen in the Lateran. They are also called *νεφωτιστοι*, or newly illuminated, because to them were revealed the mysteries of the faith, which were carefully concealed from the mere catechumens. Moreover, by the Sacrament of Baptism they received the grace of God, which imparted a new power, and spread a new light over their souls. "This bath of regeneration," says Justin Martyr,⁴ "is called illumination, because those who learn these things have their understandings illuminated." Hence "*illuminare*" is used as equivalent to *baptizare*; and an ancient Christian writer,⁵ speaking of the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Holy

¹ Henzen, *Atti dei Frat. Arv.*, p. 1.

² Prov. xxii. 2.

³ 1 Tim. iii. 6.

⁴ Apolog., i. 61.

⁵ St. Prosper of Aquitania, or the author of the book "*De Promiss. et Prædic. Dei*," which goes by his name, ii. 39.

Eucharist, says that we are enlightened by the one and fed by the other. The title *νεοφώτιστος* may be read on several epitaphs, which, being in Greek, are probably very ancient—e.g.,

L.M., xi. 18, 19.
R.S., iii. xxiv. 1;
xxviii. 44.

ΔΙΟΝΤΙΟΝ ΝΕΟΦΩΤΙΟΝ ΕΝΙΑΝΤΟΤ ΕΝΟΚ ΜΗΝΩΝ ΤΕΤΤΑΡΩΝ.

"Dionysius, newly illuminated. (A child) of one year four months."

Among the dated inscriptions, which (as our readers will remember) begin to multiply towards the latter half of the fourth century, we have instances of the Sacrament of Baptism administered to children of five, six, eight, and nine years, and also to adults of twenty-eight and forty-two. During the first week after baptism, whilst they still retained their white garments, they were called *infantes* and *pueri*; and this title was not confined to those who were really children according to the flesh; for St. Augustin¹ tells us of Victorinus, the famous Roman rhetorician, that "though old, he was not ashamed to be called a child (*puer*) of Christ and an infant of God's font."

Catechumen.

xi. 29

At No. 22 of our selection we give an example of a catechumen, or person under instruction for baptism, aged eight years; the other example in the Lateran is of a Greek, named Andragathos; his age is not specified.

(4.) The
Sacraments of
Baptism and

Bull., 1869, p. 30.

A Greek inscription was found a few years since on the Via Latina, recording of a lady who had belonged to one of the Gnostic sects in the third century, that she had been "anointed in the baths of Christ with His pure and incorruptible ointment"—an inscription which manifestly refers to two separate rites in use among the Gnostics, in imitation of two of the Christian sacraments. In an inscription of the latter part of the fourth century one of these sacraments is expressed by washing, the other by anointing; and St. Cyprian, a hundred and twenty years earlier, had used the same word to denote confirmation. "It is necessary," he says, "that he who has been baptized should be also anointed, that having received the chrism, *i.e.*, the unction, he may become *Unctus Dei*." The epitaph of a Christian lady buried in Spoleto calls it by

Bull., 1871, p.
109; 1869, p. 23.

¹ Confess., viii. 2.

another name; and it records that she was a neophyte, and had been *consignata* by Pope Liberius: this, of course, belongs to the middle of the fourth century. And we read of a boy who died when he was a little more than five years old, *Bimus trimus consecutus est*—words which were a veritable enigma to all antiquarians, until the learned Marini compared with them the phrases of Roman law, *bima trima die de reddita*, *bima trima die legatum solutum*, and pointed out that as these phrases undoubtedly signified that such a portion of the dowry or legacy was paid in the second year, and such another portion in the third, so the corresponding words in the Christian epitaph could only mean that the deceased had received something when he was two years old, and something else when he was three; and although the particular gifts received are not mentioned, we can have no difficulty in supplying baptism and confirmation. De Rossi adopts this interpretation; indeed, it does not seem possible to suggest any other.

Moreover, when seeking for evidence in the Catacombs with reference to the Sacrament of Confirmation, we must remember that this was generally administered in olden times immediately after baptism, of which it was considered the complement and perfection. "From time immemorial," says Tertullian (*ab immemorabili*), "as soon as we have emerged from the bath [of regeneration] we are anointed with the holy unction." Hence it may be doubted which sacrament was intended, or rather it is probable that it was intended to include both under the words which have been mentioned before, and referred to baptism—the verbs *accepit*, *percepit*, *consecutus est*.

There are but faint traces, so far as we know, of any other of the sacraments of the Church in the epitaphs of the early Christians in Rome. There is a monument placed under Column XIV. of the Lateran collection which was set up by the parents of one Cægrilius Bottus Philadespotus to their sweetest son, who died when he was a little more than nine

and of the
Holy
Eucharist,

under the sym-
bols of Bread
and Fish.

Bull., 1872,
p. 100.

Bull., 1865,
p. 76.

years old. There is nothing in the inscription to indicate that the boy or his parents were Christian until we come to the end, when we see most carefully engraved an anchor, a fish, and a small circular loaf, marked on the top, in the old Roman fashion, with deep lines in the form of a cross, to facilitate its division. On another stone in the Kircherian Museum are engraved four similar loaves and two fishes underneath them. And the same symbols appear again on the following grave-stone, which was found in Modena in 1862. De Rossi attri-

SYNTROPHION



butes this stone to the third century, and the Roman one is probably of the same date; for, from his intimate familiarity with ancient Christian monuments, he is able to certify that whereas we cannot tell how early the fish began to be used as a mystical symbol of the Christian faith, it had become extremely rare by the middle of the fourth century, and almost or altogether ceased by the beginning of the fifth. The same high authority does not doubt that this symbolical representation was intended to refer to the Holy Eucharist, that blessed sacrament which, having been the food of Syntrophion during life, now gave his surviving friends the sure hope of his resurrection to life everlasting.¹ For some of our readers this interpretation may require a few words of explanation.

They are probably already aware that from the earliest times the fish was an acknowledged symbol of our Blessed Lord. The initial letters of His name and principal titles (in Greek) made up the word $\text{I}\chi\theta\epsilon\upsilon$, or fish:—

I $\text{H}\text{C}\text{O}\text{T}\text{C}$ = JESUS
 X $\text{P}\text{I}\text{C}\text{T}\text{O}\text{C}$ = CHRIST
 Θ EOT = OF GOD
 T IOC = SON
 C $\Omega\text{T}\text{H}\text{P}$ = SAVIOUR

¹ St. John vi. 55.

And when once this had been pointed out, the fish became a sacred *tessera*, unintelligible indeed to the outer world, but highly valued and of most convenient use to the faithful, embodying, as it did, with wonderful brevity and distinctness a complete abridgment of the Creed—a profession of faith, as it were, both in the two natures, the Unity of Person and the Redemptorial office of our Divine Lord. Hence, Clement of Alexandria names the fish as one of the figures which might very properly be used on Christian seals, because “it contains in one name,” as Optatus says,¹ “by means of its single letters, a whole multitude of holy names.” But not only did the fish represent to the early Christians their Divine Lord; they considered that they were to resemble Him in this, as in all things else, and so themselves also were spoken of as little fish, because they received their new and spiritual birth in the element of water.²

As, therefore, the lamb stands, both in Holy Scripture and in early Christian art, both for Christ, “the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world,” and for us Christians, who are “the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand,” as the dove also sometimes represents the Holy Spirit, and sometimes those who are born of the Holy Spirit and in whom He dwells, so the fish in like manner denotes either one born again in the waters of baptism, or Christ, Who, as Origen says,³ is figuratively called the fish. If the fish is engraved alone upon a tombstone, it may be doubtful which interpretation ought to be adopted; but if it is united with other symbols, as it usually is, the context will generally determine the sense. Thus, when we find ancient gems engraved with the figure of a ship on a fish’s back, we can hardly be in error if we take it to mean Christ upholding His Church; or if a lamb or a dove occupy the place of the ship, we understand a Christian soul supported by Christ through the waves and storms of life. But when we find it united with bread, we know of no other sense that can

¹ Adv. Parmenianum, lib. iii.

² Tertull., De Baptismo, i.

³ In Matt., Hom. xiii. 10.

be reasonably given to it than that of a Christian soul fed by the Holy Eucharist.

We need not trespass upon the domain of Christian art to find a justification of this interpretation, we will confine ourselves within the limits of our present subject—ancient Christian epitaphs; and of these there are two very remarkable specimens, the language of which will quite bear us out in all that we have said.

This interpretation confirmed by the epitaph of St. Abercius.

Both of these epitaphs are written in verse, and their language is figurative; but for this very reason they are the better able to throw light upon the figures engraved on the tombstones, there being a natural affinity between the language of art and poetry.

The first is the epitaph of St. Abercius, Bishop of Hierapolis, a town situated within a few miles of Laodicea and Colossæ. Hence there was a Christian Church there from the very earliest times. St. Paul sends them his salutations in his Epistle to their neighbours at Colossæ,¹ and we have fragments of the writings of two of their Bishops even before St. Abercius, viz., Claudius Apollinaris and Papias. The last-named writer died about A.D. 170, and we are indebted to him for one of the earliest mentions of the Gospels which has reached us. Abercius seems to have lived not long after him, about the end of the second century. His epitaph has been long known, but was only imperfectly understood until recent discoveries of Christian monuments had thrown fresh light upon its mystical language.² The part of it which concerns our present subject is contained in a few lines towards its conclusion. Abercius has been describing his many and distant travels through Syria and to Rome, and he says—

Πίστις δὲ προήγε,
καὶ παρέθηκε τροφήν Ἰχθύν τε μὴς ἀπὸ πηγῆς
παμμεγέθης, καθαρὸν, ὃν ἐδράξατο παρθένος ἀγνή·
καὶ τοῦτον παρέδωκε φίλοις ἔσθαι διὰ παντός,
ὁὖον χρηστὸν ἔχουσα, κέραςμα διδοῦσα μετ' ἄρτου·
ταῦθ' ὁ νοῶν εὗξαιτο ὑπὲρ μου πᾶς ὁ συμπόδης.

¹ iv. 13.

² Spicil. Solesm., iii. 533; Acta SS. Bolland. Oct., tom. ix. p. 491.

There are one or two unimportant variations in the reading of this text, and one or two words the translation of which is doubtful. The following translation omits none of these points that is of the least consequence. We translate, then, as follows :—"Faith led me on the road [or brought to me], and set before me for food fish from the one [or the sacred, or the Divine] fountain, the great and spotless fish which the pure Virgin embraced [or took in hand];¹ and this fish she gave to her friends to eat everywhere, having good wine, giving wine mixed with water, and bread. May he who understands these things pray for me." The allusion contained in the words, "the one fountain," need not be explained here; and all the rest is easily understood when once we recognise that the fish was used as a symbol of Christ in the Holy Eucharist; bread and wine and the fish come naturally together as the visible and invisible parts of one great mystery. Abercius is using a language which, whilst seeming enigmatical to the public, is (as he indicates in the last line) easily understood by the faithful throughout the whole world.

The second epitaph we have spoken of was discovered in 1839 in the ancient Cemetery of St. Pierre d'Estrier, near Autun, and its chronology has been made the subject of much critical discussion, some placing it as early as the time of the Antonines in the second century, others as late as the end of the fourth, and possibly even the fifth; whilst Cardinal Pitra, P. Secchi, P. Garrucci, and other learned authorities assign it to the earlier part of the third. De Rossi observes that the

and another
epitaph found
at Autun;

¹ Some understand by this pure Virgin our Blessed Lady, the mother of this mystical Fish; others understand Faith, which the early Christians often personified. We shall see in the next chapter one of the martyrs who, being interrogated about his parents, answered, "My true father is Christ; my true mother is faith in Christ" (see p. 140). The bread and the fountain are also brought together in a line of the Sibylline verses, vi. 15.—ἐκ δὲ μὲν πηγῆς ἁγίου κόπος ἔσσεται ἀνδρῶν. And bread and the Blessed Virgin in i. 359. Pitra quotes in illustration an ancient title of our Blessed Lady, *fons Bethlenicus*; Bethlehem meaning the House of Bread.

characters in which it was written are not so old as the ideas which it expresses. Even these, however, he considers may possibly be earlier than the fourth century; but about the ideas there is a flavour of antiquity which cannot be mistaken, so that even some of those who believe that it was put together in its present form in the fourth century, think also that the particular part of it which has reference to the fish was probably as old as the days of St. Irenæus. The whole epitaph is too long to be inserted here; we quote only those fragments which concern our subject :—

Ἰχθύος οὐρανίου θεῖον γένος,
 Σωτῆρος δ' ἁγίων μελιηδέα λάμβανε βρώσιν·
 Ἔσθιε, πίνε, δοῦν' Ἰχθὺν ἔχων παλάμαις.

That is, it begins by calling upon Christians as “the Divine children or offspring of the Heavenly Fish,” and then, after an allusion (in the intermediate lines which we have omitted) to their new and immortal life, received in the sacred waters which enrich the soul with wisdom, the writer goes on to bid them “receive the sweet food of the Saviour of the saints. Eat and drink, receiving, or holding, the Fish in your two hands;” which was at that time the mode of receiving holy communion.

These two epitaphs, from the East and the West, may be taken as proofs of the widely-spread use of the symbol of the fish in connection with the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, and justify us in contending that on the gravestones of the Catacombs the same symbol may not improbably have the same meaning. At the same time our readers must be on their guard against a foolish determination to find a hidden Christian meaning in everything painted or engraved on these ancient monuments, and a Christian sentiment in every word. We have known a modern author, interpreting these epitaphs, refuse to translate

ΘΑΡΣΥΙΑΣ ΟΥ
 ΔΙΣ ΑΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ.

“Be of good courage; no man is immortal.”

He thought it more edifying to read, "[The son of] Tharsoiasus, twice immortal!" though he could not explain what was meant by it. And it is notorious how several writers, both at home and abroad, have been sorely puzzled to find a place in the succession of Roman Pontiffs, or among the Antipopes, for a man named Antimio, who died in the year 392, and who happened to be called in his (metrical) epitaph *Papas*. The epitaph was written by some one to whom Antimio had been foster-father, and he is therefore addressed in the first line as *Nutritor*, and in the fourth line he is called by an equivalent title *Papa*!

We do not know that anybody has been guilty of similar absurdities with reference to the interpretation of the fish and other symbols; but such a blunder might easily be made by one who was not aware of the various uses to which symbols were sometimes put by Christians as well as others. This will be pointed out in a future chapter. Meanwhile we only invite our readers to suspect an allusion to one of the sacraments when they find a fish engraved on a Christian monument in connection with water, and an allusion to another when they find it connected with bread. In both cases all the surrounding circumstances must be carefully taken into consideration before a decision is come to.

CHAPTER VIII.

THEIR MORAL AND SOCIAL ASPECT.

Interest of ancient inscriptions as records of mere human thought and feeling—Special interest of ancient Christian epilaphs—Acts of the Martyrs the only other records of the same period—Importance of these two witnesses when they agree, e.g., in omitting all mention of titles, parentage, country—Of slaves; freedmen; alumni; love of the poor; of labour; of chastity; innocence—Practical conclusions.

Interest of all
ancient
inscriptions,

“ PLEASED as I was to meet with an old monument or statue in the course of my travels, I was much more delighted when I had the opportunity of reading a beautiful inscription. I felt as if a human voice was speaking to me out of the stone, sending its sound across long centuries of time, and crying out to men in the midst of the wilderness, ‘You are not alone; other men have thought and felt and suffered before, like yourself.’ If the inscription belongs to an ancient people that has perished, it conveys to the soul a certain sense of immensity, and awakens in us the thought of immortality, since it shows how ideas can survive the fall of empires.”

especially
if Christian.

If these remarks of a favourite French author of the last century express truly the feelings of educated men in the presence of ancient inscriptions, certainly no Christian can fail to take a lively interest in the inscriptions of the first ages of the Church. For these do not preserve to us the records of an extinct civilisation, or of a nation that has passed away, but of our own spiritual forefathers, of those with whom we have an intimate connection both in faith and feeling. We have already seen what dogmas of the faith these monuments bear witness to, more or less explicitly; in the present chapter we

propose to speak of the less formal, but scarcely less interesting, subject of Christian thought and feeling. But, alas! as we have before observed, most of these epitaphs are too brief to give us the information we desire. It is here that we specially lament their laconic brevity. The dogmas of the faith are secured to us by the creeds and tradition of the Church, but the tone and temper of an age dies with it, and can only be recovered by a diligent study of its domestic records, which in the early Church consist mainly of epitaphs of the dead. One other class of documents there is belonging to the same period, to which we have occasionally referred—the Acts of the Martyrs; and where the testimony of these two witnesses is found to agree, whilst they differ from all similar documents of the same class belonging to the professors of other religions, their importance can hardly be called in question.¹ If, for example, they agree in withholding information on certain points on which the epitaphs and the judicial examinations of other men are wont to be communicative, we may confidently infer that the cause of this unusual silence is to be sought in the tenets of the Christian religion.

Acts of the Martyrs only contemporary record of same kind.

Now, the judicial examination of men accused of any crime ordinarily begins with an inquiry as to their name, condition in life, worldly occupation, and other personal details. But on most of these points we find many of the martyrs and confessors of the faith were as obstinately reticent as their tombstones. They opposed to all questionings about them the short but comprehensive answer, "I am a Christian." Again and again they caused no little perplexity to their judges by the pertinacity with which they adhered to this brief profession of faith. The question was repeated, "Who are you?" and they replied, "I have already said that I am a Christian; and he who says that has thereby named his country, his family, his profession, and all things else besides." Or if they consented

These witnesses agree on certain important points.

L.B., i. pp. 120-130.

E.g., silence about parentage,

¹ The examples which follow are taken only from Acts which are acknowledged as genuine by all critics.

and civil condition.

to amplify their reply, the perplexity of the magistrates was only the more increased, for they seemed to speak insoluble enigmas. "I am a slave of Cæsar," they said, "but a Christian who has received his liberty from Christ Himself;" or, contrariwise, "I am a free man, the slave of Christ;" so that it sometimes happened that it became necessary to send for the proper official (the *curator civitatis*) to ascertain the truth as to their civil condition. If questioned about their parents, they denied that they had any, because Christ had said, "Call none your father upon earth; for one is your Father who is in heaven;"¹ or they used symbolical language, and said, "Our Father is Christ, and our mother is the faith whereby we believe in Him." When brought face to face with their parents, and accused of falsehood, they replied, "Now I have fulfilled the law of Christ, which says; 'That except a man renounce father, and mother, and wife, and children for His name's sake, he is none of His.'" They owned no country as their native home, but "confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers on the earth," and that they were "seeking a better, a heavenly country;" that they were citizens of "that Jerusalem which is above, which was their mother."²

With these memories of the martyrs fresh in our mind, let us open any large collection of ancient epitaphs, or let us visit either the Lapidarian Gallery at the Vatican or the new selection in the galleries of the Lateran, and it is impossible not to be struck by evidence of the same characteristics pervading these also. What the martyrs habitually refused to answer to their judges is rarely or never to be found upon the epitaphs; and in these particulars there is the most remarkable contrast between Christian epitaphs and Pagan.

Slaves not mentioned in epitaphs of Catacombs.

If we look into the index of any large collection of Pagan inscriptions, we find after the titles *servi* and *liberti* the word *passim*; that is to say, the mention of these two classes of society is so incessant, that it is useless to attempt to enumerate

¹ St. Matt. xxiii. 9.

² Heb. xi. 14; Gal. iv. 26.

the instances in which they occur. Among Christian inscriptions, on the other hand, we may almost say that we shall look in vain for the first of these titles, and with difficulty shall find the other. St. Paul had taught that under the new dispensation there was "neither bond nor free;" that "he that is called in the Lord, being a bondman, is the freeman of the Lord; and he that is called being free is the bondman of Christ."¹ *R.S., ii.* And hence we find Christian men writing themselves down as slaves of God, but never slaves of their fellow-men. Aringhi, indeed, records an epitaph, *Hic situs Notatus servus fidelissimus*; but there is nothing to show that this too should not be understood in the same sense as having reference to the service of God. Bosio also has another which must certainly be the epitaph of a young Christian slave set up by his *p. 437.* masters:—

FORTUNIONI BENEMERENTI
QUI VIXIT ANNIS XVI. M.V.D. XV.
FECERUN[T] DOMINI SUI IN PACE

"To the well-deserving Fortunio, who lived sixteen years five months fifteen days, his owners made this. In peace."

And Boldetti gives a third, the epitaph of a young girl, whose *p. 385.* parents record that out of charity they have given their liberty to seven slaves on the day of her funeral.

Of freedmen we have a few more notices, mainly of the same *Rare mention of liberti.* indirect kind. One, whose patron had died and been buried whilst he was absent, in the year 217, added on his return a *I.C.* few words on the side of the sarcophagus, recording the day on which he had been "taken to God" (*receptus ad Deum*), and that this addition to the epitaph had been written by "Ampelius, a freedman." The whole monument had been erected by grateful freedmen—*Patrono piissimo liberti benemerenti sarcophagum de suo adornaverunt*—and it was only natural, therefore, that this Christian who added the date of

¹ Col. iii. 11; 1 Cor. vii. 22.

the death should mention that he too belonged to the same class. Three epitaphs in the Catacomb of St. Callixtus were in like manner the work of grateful freedmen, who (it would seem) must have been themselves also Christians. Possibly they had received their freedom from their Christian owners (in two instances ladies, in the other a gentleman) on occasion of their conversion, as we read in the Acts of St. Sebastian of some who, becoming Christians, gave liberty to their slaves, "because men who had begun to have God for their Father ought not to be the slaves of men."

L.M., xiii. 19.

AURELIO SCOLACIO PATRONO
DIGNISSIMO QUI VIXIT ANNIS LXX
IN PACE LIBERTI FECERUNT

R.S., iii. xxii. 2.

PETRONIÆ AUXENTIÆ C.F.
QUE VIXIT ANNIS XXX. LIBERTI FE
. . . NEMERENTI IN PACE.

R.S., i. xx. '3.

MARCIE RUFINE DIGNE PATRONE
SECUNDUS LIBERTUS FECIT.

"To Aurelius Scolacius, their most worthy patron, who lived seventy years, his freedmen made this. In peace."

"To Petronia Auxentia, a lady of senatorial rank (*clara femina*), who lived thirty years, well-deserving, her freedmen made this. In peace."

"To Marcia Rufina, a worthy patroness, Secundus, her freedman, made this."

The paucity of inscriptions of this class cannot be attributed to accident; it betrays the influence of Christian teaching, of which an ancient witness¹ wrote that it recognised no difference between slaves and masters, for that Christians call one another brethren for this very reason, because they account themselves to be all equal.

More frequent
mention of
alumni.

O.H., 2795, 4147,
4359.

There was another class of persons in ancient Roman society whose condition varied indeed very much according to the disposition of those into whose hands they fell, but in itself was essentially that of slavery; hence they are sometimes

¹ Lactant., *Div. Instit.*, v. 14, 15.

coupled with the *liberti*, or provision is made in a last testament for their manumission. We speak of the *alumni*, or foster-children, most of whom were children who had been exposed by their inhuman parents, and being taken up by others, became their property. Everybody knows that even Greek philosophy counselled the murder of all misshapen children, and such as, being born of aged or diseased parents, did not promise to grow up strong and healthy citizens; and that the ancient Roman law gave a father the right of life and death within his own family. If, when a child was born, the father was unwilling that it should be brought up, it was either killed without pity, or sold, or exposed in some public place. This latter practice was discountenanced indeed, and even prohibited by the imperial laws, but Tertullian tells us that no law was evaded more easily, or with greater impunity. He even boldly challenges the very magistrates themselves, who were most forward in persecuting the Christians, and asks which of them can truly say that he had never made away with any of his own children, either by cold or hunger, or by drowning, or by throwing it to the dogs.¹ The common lot of children thus exposed was, we may be sure, either that they perished miserably, or that a still harder lot awaited them in the hands of odious speculators, who brought them up for their own selfish purposes to a life of slavery or sin. Pliny's letters to Trajan attest the frequency with which difficulties were apt to arise as to the legal *status* of these children. Trajan ruled that if it could be proved that they were the children of free parents they could not be held in bondage, nor even any demand made upon them for the refunding of the expense of their past maintenance. But in most cases it would not have been easy to supply such proof, so that they would be retained in slavery. Here then was a large and tempting field for the exercise of charity, of which we may be sure that the ancient Christians availed themselves as eagerly in Rome as is done to-day in

¹ Apolog., ix. ad Gentes i. 15.

China or other Heathen countries. It is not surprising, therefore, that we should find even in the small selection at the Lateran nearly a dozen epitaphs to the memory of these *alumni* or *alumnae*, set up by their loving guardians; and in books we shall find very many more. Such epitaphs are not altogether wanting even in Pagan collections; but, as might have been expected, they are proportionately far more numerous among Christians. Sometimes the title only is given, without any epithet of affection, as in the following, from the Cemetery of St. Hermes:—

I.C., No. 56.

SEM VESTINO ALOM D V ID JAN
ACYNDINO ET PROC CONSS.

“To Semnius [or Sempronius] Vestinus, my foster-child, buried the 9th of January A.D. 340.”

L.M., xiii.
23, 27.

C.I.L., iii. 2194.

More commonly, there is at least the addition of some such word as *Dulcissimo*, and sometimes much more demonstrative tokens of affection, as in the following, *Alumno quem semper vice fili dilexit vivus posuit locus concessus a Cassia Afrodite*, where the affection which dictated the epitaph is more easily recognised than the grammatical construction of the words by which it is expressed. It seems to say that the place of burial was granted by one person and the epitaph written by another, who loved his *alumnus* in the place of a son. Another, in the Lateran Museum, says that he loved him tenderly, “*Quem amavit teneriter*.” A third, in the same collection, speaks still more strongly. Coritus loved the young Florentius, who died at the age of thirteen, “more than if he had been his own son” (*plus amavit quam si filium suum*): Coritus, however, is called not *patronus*, but *magister*; so probably Florentius was one of his pupils or apprentices (*discentes*) rather than a foster-child.

xiii. 24; xvii. 3.

Christian
charity.

For Christian charity was not confined within the limits of flesh and blood, or of accidental social relationship; it embraced the whole human race, and in an especial manner those whom the Pagan world had been wont most to despise and shun—viz., the poor and suffering. We have an indication of

this in a title inscribed on an epitaph of the middle of the fourth century, which records the death of one Junianus, aged forty, who was buried on the 12th of April, A.D. 341; and his widow Victoria, who had lived with him for fifteen years from her virginity, records both of him and of herself that they were "lovers of the poor."

Love of the poor.

DEPOSSIO JUNIANI PRI IDUS APRILES MARCELLINO ET PROBINO
CONSS

QUI BIXIT ANNIS XL IN PACE DECISSIT ET AMATOR PAUPER-
ORUM BIXIT

CUM BRGNIA ANNIS XV BENEMERENTI VIRGINIA SUA VICTORA
BENEMERENTI FECIT AMATRIX PAUPERORUM ET OPERARIA.

The title of friend of the poor (*amicus pauperum*) is given in another epitaph to a Lector of the *titulus Fasciolæ* in Rome in the year 377; and in another set up at Milan, A.D. 486, a lady is called *amatrix pauperum*. To these may be added also a much more ancient inscription, found near the cathedral of Tharros, in Sardinia, to the memory of one who died at the age of sixty-five, and of whom his widow Clementia testifies that he was the dearest of friends, that he served the commandments of Christ in all things, and that he was a *præstator bonus pauperum*, which may be translated perhaps, "kind patron of the poor," unless (as De Rossi suggests) it be taken as the oldest example of the modern Italian *prestatore*, taken in a good sense, as one who "showeth mercy and lendeth."¹ In either sense it illustrates our present subject, and it may fairly be used for that purpose, as it undoubtedly belongs to the same period of time as the epitaphs of the Roman Catacombs, though it comes from a different country.

Bull., 1873,
p. 132.

The first feeling which the sight of these epitaphs is likely to raise in the mind of a Christian, is a sense of their appropriateness as memorials of the disciples of Him who came to preach the Gospel to the poor, and showed Himself in so many ways their benefactor and friend. And next he would

Alleged similar examples among Pagans examined.

¹ Ps. xxxvi. 26.

probably reflect that such a title might be sought in vain amid the many thousands of Pagan epitaphs that have come down to us. Modern travellers,¹ however, tell us of a Pagan inscription of the second or third century, found in Asia Minor, in memory of one "who loved the poor for piety's sake" (τὸν πτωχὸν φιλοῦντα διὰ τὴν εὐσεβίαν); and on another Pagan monument on the Appian Way between Rome and Albano an inscription invites the stranger to stop as he passes and to look at the tomb on his left hand, which contains the bones of a man "good, merciful, and loving the poor" (*boni, misericordis, amantis pauperis*).² Mommsen remarks that both the style and the sentiment of this inscription is eminently plebeian. The inscription itself records that the man's name was Euodius, and that he was a freedman of C. Atilius Serranus, and a fashionable jeweller in the Via Sacra.³ A third inscription, at Beneventum, says of a Pagan nobleman, that "he loved everybody and was himself beloved by everybody" (*amanti omnium et amato omnibus*).

C.I.L., i. 224.
O.H., 7244.

I.R.N., 1431.

And besides these inscriptions, there are a few others breathing more or less the same spirit, inasmuch as they record what we should now call charitable bequests. One is of a doctor, or rather of an apothecary, a dealer in herbs and confections (*aromatarius*), who leaves to his son-in-law (who was in the same way of business) a small sum of money—about £50—and three hundred pots of his drugs and sweetmeats (*vascula dulciariorum*), in order that medical treatment may be supplied gratuitously to his poor and sick fellow-townsmen (*ægris inopibus*). A lady of Terracina founds an institution in memory of her son, in which 100 boys and girls are to

O.H., 114.

¹ Perrot et Guillaume, *Exploration de la Galatie*, p. 119.

² This is, of course, put for *pauperes*, just as we read on the medals of Augustus, *Ob civis servatos*.

³ We say "fashionable" because the fact of residence in the Via Sacra is often recorded on monuments, as though it were specially honourable. Other localities similarly distinguished were the Circus Maximus and the Vicus Tuscus.

be fed for ever, each going out as soon as he has attained a certain age—the boys at sixteen, the girls at fourteen—and all vacancies to be filled up at once, so that the number may always remain complete. And a gentleman of Atina, in the kingdom of Naples, leaves in like manner about £3000 for the maintenance of the children of his fellow-townsmen until they come of age, when they are to be sent out into the world, each with the sum of about £8. *O.H.*, 6669. *J.R.N.*, 4546.

It is probable that these last bequests were direct imitations of the example which had been set by Trajan, who is usually accounted the first Imperial founder of institutions of this kind. Nerva, indeed, his predecessor, had made some movement in the same direction; but Trajan organised it on a much larger scale, extended it to all Italy, and provided for its permanence. It appears from an inscription found at Beneventum that in the first five years of his reign he made nine such foundations, which together provided for the support of nearly 14,000 children, and these were allowed to take the name of *Ulpiani*, in honour of their benefactor.¹ We know that his example was imitated not only by the best of his successors on the Imperial throne, but also by private individuals—*e.g.*, Pliny the younger, who both made a similar foundation himself, in lieu of the scenic or gladiatorial shows that were expected from him, and also exhorted his friends to do the same.² Imperial benevolence imitated by private individuals.

The more obscure individuals whose epitaphs have been given above were probably moved by the same example, though Henzen would claim for the first of them (the jeweller's) an earlier date, for he assigns it to the Augustan age.³ But what was the real motive of them all? Was it a genuine love for the poor? or was it mere patriotism, and a desire to benefit their country?

¹ Medals are extant of the *pueri et puella Faustini* of the years 153, 160, and 161, giving thanks to Faustina, the wife of Antoninus Pius, for a similar foundation.

² Ep. lib. i. 8; vii. 18.

³ This antiquity is disputed by Egger, *Mémoires d'Histoire Ancienne et de Philologie*, p. 355. Paris, 1863.

I.R.N., 488a.

Pagan estimate of pity.

In the case of the Emperors and their officers, it is plain that the latter was the real motive. Pliny speaks distinctly of the *publica utilitas*; and in another epitaph, which has sometimes been referred to in connection with this subject, a gentleman who is praised for his lavish distribution of money is significantly qualified as "a lover of his fellow-citizens." But of Euodius, on the contrary, it is said that he was good and compassionate, "loving the poor." If he lived and died in the Augustan age, it must be allowed that his character presents a singular exception to that of the age in which he lived, and was even superior to the teaching of the higher schools of Pagan philosophy. Quintilian tells us that Pity was honoured in Rome as a goddess; ¹ yet Cicero, and Aristotle before him, had condemned it as a weakness; ² and Virgil enumerates among the characteristics of his happy man, ³ that he neither suffered pain by pitying the poor, nor envy at the sight of the rich. At a later period, Seneca draws a line of distinction between the feeling of pity and the active habit of beneficence, and says that all good men will cultivate the one and avoid the other. For "What is pity?" he asks: "many praise it as a virtue, and call a good man compassionate" (which is just what the writer of this epitaph has done). "But pity is really a fault or vice of the mind; of a little mind giving way at the sight of other men's misfortunes; it is a weakness of mind—the wise man does not pity." "Nevertheless, he will come to the help of another man's tears though he takes no part in them (*occurret, non accedet*), he will stretch forth his hand to the shipwrecked, show hospitality to the exile, give a coin to the poor man, and divide his bread with the hungry." ⁴

We need not stop to insist upon the essential difference between such beneficence as this and the charity of the Gospel, which bids us "rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep." ⁵

¹ V. xi. 38.² Cic., Tusc. Quæst., iv. 8; Aristot. de Rhet., ii. 8.³ Georg., ii. 499.⁴ De Clem., lib. 2 cc. 4-6; De Benef., c. 95.⁵ Rom. xii. 15.

We conclude then that the two Pagan epitaphs which have been quoted, and which say of the deceased that they "loved the poor," are of a character altogether exceptional. The Greek one, indeed, being confessedly of the second or third century, was not improbably due to the secret influence of Christianity, which was insensibly changing the tone of men's thoughts, and guiding the world into an order of new ideas. "The world did not see the source of the change; it was hidden in the obscure retreats of the infant Church, but it was kept alive by the care and the charity of that new race of men who were receiving into their houses sick slaves cast away by their masters, infants exposed by their parents, and the poor who were dying of hunger at the doors of the wealthy men of Rome."¹ "In this way Christian charity, which so often in our own days leaves traces of itself in souls whence the light of faith has been withdrawn, seems also to have gone before faith in penetrating the darkness of Paganism, like that sweet and gentle light which both anticipates and survives the full brightness of the day."² That this was so, we have the most conclusive evidence that could be desired, the testimony of an enemy. "These cursed Galileans," writes Julian the Apostate to the Pagan *Pontifex Maximus*, "feed not only their own poor, but ours also whom they see uncared for;" and he goes on to insist on the necessity of imitating them in this trait of their character, if an effectual barrier was to be raised against the progress of the "new superstition."

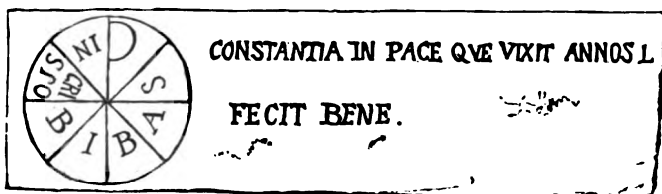
The following inscription has been sometimes misunderstood as bearing upon the point before us. One who is new to the study of ancient epitaphs might not unnaturally imagine that the words *fecit bene* were intended to testify to the good works and active benevolence of this lady, Constantia, who had lived fifty years, and for whom the ancient acclamation, "Mayest thou live in Christ," is renewed in an artistic form. But the

The phrase
Fecit bene
explained.

¹ Villemain, *De la Philosophie Stoïque et du Christianisme*, p. 62.

² Wallon, *Histoire de l'Esclavage dans l'Antiquité*, tom. iii. p. iii. c. i.

truth is, the inscription is incomplete : *fecit bene* is predicated not of Constantia, but of somebody else whose name it was intended to add, as the friend or relative who had buried her



and set up her epitaph. For this is all that is meant by the words. We have seen *fecit* used in this sense in several epitaphs ;¹ but *bene fecit* occurs also in some ten or twelve inscriptions of the Catacombs. It is expressed somewhat more fully in the following, found in 1843 in the Cemetery of St. Hermes :

GERONTIUS QUI VIXIT ANNOS XXV.
REMISIT AMUMNU NOMINE BENIGNU
QUI FECIT CORPORI BENE.

"Gerontius, who lived twenty-five years. He left behind him a foster-child by name Benignus, who fulfilled all the last offices for his body."

Or, as it is expressed in another epitaph found in the same place, "took care of his body," *curam corporis egit*. The phrase *fecit bene* occurs continually in this sense on the epitaphs of a Christian cemetery of the fourth or fifth century, lately discovered at Tropea, on the coast of Calabria.

Christian love
of labour.

But to return to our Christian epitaph of A.D. 341. The widow of Junianus called herself not only a lover of the poor, but also *operaria* ; and this, too, though a word of reproach among the Heathen, was an eminently Christian excellence. Cicero² couples the word *operarii* with *barbari*, using both as terms of ignominy. But we need not multiply proofs upon this point. It is notorious with what contempt the ancient Heathen world looked upon labour, especially manual labour. They deemed it the natural and inevitable lot of slaves, but altogether unworthy of a free man. From the Christian point

¹ See pages 119 and 142.

² Tusc. Quest., v. 36.

Bull., 1873,
p. 134.

Bull., 1877,
p. 96.

of view, on the other hand, it was the penalty of man's fall; but it was also a remedy for sin, and a condition of future reward. Even the Apostles themselves would "not eat any man's bread for nothing, but in labour and toil worked night and day, lest they should be chargeable to any," and they declared that "if any man will not work, neither let him eat." They "charged therefore and besought their disciples that, working with silence, they would eat their own bread."¹ This is not the only epitaph, therefore, in which this subject of praise is recorded; we find it on another in the newly discovered cemetery of St. Nicomedes in the Villa Patrizi, where a lady named Catianilla is called *ἡγεραιος*, and a third lady is said to have been *Laborum au[c]trix, castis socia.* *Bull.*, 1865.
p. 53.

This last epitaph puts us in mind of another virtue which is specially commended in the ancient Christian epitaphs,—modesty and chastity; but of this we have already said enough in another place, and we have noted its recognition by the old Romans themselves. We may say the same also about love and concord, quietness and amiability, in husbands and wives. We will add, however, one more epitaph, illustrating the former subject, from the Cemetery of St. Callixtus :—

. . . TATI VIRGINIÆ SUÆ PROBILIANUS
QUEIUS FIDELITATEM ET CASTITATE ET BONITATE
OMNES VICINALES EXPERTI SUNT, QUÆ
ANNIS. N. VIII. ABSENTIA VIRGINI SUI SUAM CAS
TITATEM CUSTODIVIT UNDE IN HOC LOCO SANCTO
DEPOSITA EST III. KAL. FEBR.

R.S., iii., xxiv. 4.

"Probilianus to [Felic]itas, his wife from her virginity, whose fidelity, chastity, and goodness all her neighbours have known by experience; who preserved her chastity during the eight years' absence of her husband; wherefore she is buried in this holy place, the 30th of January."

The innocence of children, too, was made a theme of panegyric even on Pagan monuments; not so much, however, on its own account, perhaps, as a ground of complaint against the cruel fate which took them away so early from life. Moreover, in Christian epitaphs this quality is expressed under very pretty

Innocence in children and others.

¹ 2 Thess. iii. 8-12.

Expressed by
figures and
emblems.

figures, taken partly from Holy Scripture, partly from the writings of the Fathers, or rather (to speak more accurately) which are to be found in both those places alike. We have seen one child called "a little lamb of God."¹ Another title, used much more frequently, is "a little dove," "a dove without gall." This peculiar notion of natural history is mentioned both by St. Cyprian and Tertullian. The former says² that "the Holy Spirit came down in the shape of a dove, which is a simple and joyous creature, not bitter with gall;" and the latter³ writes of it just as the epitaphs do, that it is "without gall." Hence it was taken as an emblem of simplicity, gentleness, and innocence, and used sometimes to stand for the Holy Spirit Himself, sometimes for a Christian soul, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit, just as we have seen that the very words themselves, *Spiritus Sanctus*, were used in the same double meaning. On an epitaph of the end of the third century, or beginning of the fourth, this title of "a dove without gall" is given to a noble lady, aged 66. The only other title given to her is "good" (*bona femina*). In the following inscription of the year 362, "goodness" is also predicated of a young lady, "a faithful virgin" (aged 20), "a dove without gall;" modesty too, and purity of faith:—

R.S., ii. p. 185.

Bull., 1868, p. 7.

MIRÆ BONITATIS SECONDE
QUÆ VIXIT PURA FIDE ANNOS
VIGINTI PUDICA CESSAVIT
IN PACE ID VIRGO FIDELIS
BENEMERENTI QUIESCET ID JUL
PALUMBO SINE FELLE. M. ET N.⁴

"To Secunda, of wonderful goodness, who lived with pure faith twenty years; modest; she died in peace, a faithful virgin, well-deserving. She died the 15th of July, a dove without gall."

¹ See page 33, No. 4. ² De Unit. Eccles., c. ix. ³ De Baptismo, c. viii.

⁴ De Rossi says that all practised in the interpretation of old monuments will recognise in these last letters the chronological notes of the consuls Mamertinus and Nevitta; and that the ID in the fourth line of the inscription was an anticipation (in error) of the same word in the next line, where it occurs in its proper place.

It remains to inquire whether these inscriptions throw any light upon the relations between Paganism and Christianity in its early beginnings ; and De Rossi answers this question at once in the affirmative. He observes that one of the first accusations brought against "the new superstition" was "hatred of the human race." Tacitus tells us that it was for this that the Christians were condemned under Nero, and to us who know the religion of Christ as pre-eminently the religion of love, the accusation will always have sounded preposterous. Yet from the Pagan point of view it is not so hard to understand. In the mouth of a Roman statesman, or even an ordinary Roman citizen, during the first three centuries of our era, "the human race" meant only the existing social organisation of Roman civilisation ; and this, it must be allowed, was threatened in its very foundations by the teaching of the Gospel. These brief epigraphical notices of its earliest professors make it clear how little account they made of the social bonds which held together that mighty and imposing fabric.

R.S., i. 342.
Practical
conclusion.

We have seen that the most striking point of contrast between the ancient Christian inscriptions and those of their Pagan contemporaries is, that the latter constantly set forth with accuracy the *status* of the person deceased, and therefore give his several names at least, if not his parentage also, and his titles ; whilst the former, evidently of set purpose, or at least from some instinct which had the power and uniformity of law, omitted all these things as wholly without value. At first, indeed, in the very earliest infancy of the Christian society, the habit of recording the three names, or at least two, the *nomen* and *cognomen*, was not immediately and universally dropped, as we have seen by the specimens we have published from the Cemeteries of Prætextatus and of the Via Nomentana. But already the new and more simple nomenclature had been begun, and before long it came into universal use. We do not mean that there was any written or even traditional law upon

the subject ; it was the spontaneous effect of the new religious doctrines gradually leavening the whole thoughts and feelings of those who embraced them, and leaving its impress, more or less distinct, on every detail of their daily lives. It was quite possible, therefore, that here and there a few neophytes, or persons not yet thoroughly impregnated with the Christian spirit, might depart from the usual practice ; or the same thing might happen through inattention, or from some other special cause. In this way we account for the rare instances in which either slavery on the one hand, or noble blood on the other, finds a record in the epitaphs of the Catacombs. But the general rule is plain, and diametrically opposed to such a record. The Christian doctrine upon the subject is reflected in the great bulk of Christian epigraphy as in a mirror.

CHAPTER IX.

INSCRIPTIONS WITH SYMBOLS.

Epitaphs with symbolical ornamentation—Three classes of symbols—I. Religious: The Good Shepherd, Noë's ark, dove, fish, anchor, peacock, lighthouse, crowns, horse, cross, monogram in varieties of form, crux gammata—II. Civil: Marble cutters, carpenter, blacksmith, fisherman, dentist, surgeon, soldier; III. Nominal: Pagan as well as Christian. Examples.

BESIDES the common mode of writing in letters of the Greek and Latin alphabets, the early Christians made use of another peculiar to themselves—secret and hieroglyphical, so to speak—by means of images, signs, and symbols. Three columns at the Lateran Museum (XIV.–XVI.) are given up to epitaphs of this class; and they are very interesting. There are three principal families of them; the first may be called religious, as the symbols have reference to Christian doctrine; the second—civil—denoting the trade or profession which was followed by the deceased during his life; and the third—nominal—being only a pictorial rendering of his name.

The first is by far the most numerous, and most deserving our attention. There are ten specimens in our page of selections; and four of these (Nos. 2, 12, 13, and 15) contain figures of the Good Shepherd. This was quite the favourite subject of representation with the early Christians; it continued to be the leading type and most characteristic sample of Christian art all through the ages of persecution. Tertulian¹ tells us that it was often designed upon chalices. We see it ourselves painted in fresco upon the roofs and walls of

¹ De Pudicitia, cc. vii. x.



1. To Mæcius Aprilis, a maker of images, who lived twenty-seven years, two months, five days. To him, well-deserving, in peace.
2. Zosimus to Adolius [Anatolius?], his sweetest son, who lived twenty years — months three days.
3. Pontius Leo during his lifetime made this for himself; and Pontia Maza. . . . They made this for their well-deserving son Apollinaris.
4. Bauto and Maxima made this during their lifetime.
6. Elpis and Cyriace made this.
7. Epictetus and Felicia, his parents, made this for their sweetest, well-deserving son Felix, who lived fourteen years seven months eighteen days. May Christ receive thee in peace.
8. Porcella sleeps here in peace, who lived three years ten months and thirteen days.
9. Elis and Victoria, her parents, to their well-deserving daughter, who lived two years three months. In peace.
10. Antissius Crescentianus and Antisius Genialis, his sons, wrote this for their father, Antissius Crescens, who lived sixty-seven years.
11. Ælia Victorina set this up to Aurelia Proba.
12. Florentius. In peace.
13. Aurelius Castus [who lived] eight months. Antonia Sperantia [made this] for her son.
14. Severa, mayest thou live in God.
15. Sabinus to his well-deserving wife Celerina, who lived fifty-five years six months and fifteen days. In peace.
16. To the well-deserving Asellus, who lived six years eight months and twenty-eight days.

the sepulchral vaults and more spacious chambers of the Catacombs; roughly carved on innumerable gravestones, or more carefully sculptured on sarcophagi; traced in gold upon glass, moulded on lamps, engraved on rings; in a word, represented on every species of Christian monument that has come down to us. Neither need we say anything in explanation of its meaning or to justify its use. We will only note the singular appropriateness of such a figure on the tombs of the dead, who had now been received to their last home, and were housed for ever in the heavenly fold, secure from all fear and danger. "Carried home on the shoulders of the Good Shepherd" are the words used concerning the dead in one of the prayers of an old Roman sacramentary; and it is the same idea which was present to the minds of those who traced these rude figures on the gravestones. We add another specimen of the Good



Shepherd from the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, though some persons have preferred to see in this only a literal representation of the man named on the epitaph, as of his wife in the *orante*. It appears from the inscription that the husband (named Moses) procured the grave during his lifetime for himself and his wife; but, though it is very possible that he may have intended the figure of the woman in the attitude of prayer to be some sort of representation of his departed wife, it is

incredible that he should have ventured to use for himself a figure consecrated by long and universal usage to our Blessed Lord. It is less easy to account for the next figure, from the same cemetery, where a woman takes the place of the shepherd; and we shall not attempt in this place to give any explanation of it. We will only mention that these *oranti*



(as they are called), though almost always female figures, are yet found sometimes on the graves of men, the disembodied soul being the idea present to the artist, rather than the person deceased. *Bull., 1868, p. 13.*

Next to the Good Shepherd, Noe's ark is the subject which occurs most frequently in our page of specimens (Nos. 7, 9, and 15). It is always represented in one form, and that removed as far as possible from historical truth. Instead of a huge vessel riding upon the waves, containing eight persons, together with a vast multitude of living animals, we see a single individual standing in a small box, with a dove, bearing an olive branch, flying towards him; and this individual is often not a man, but a woman; once her name is added, the name of the deceased on whose gravestone it was painted—Juliana. The meaning of this is quite obvious. "Nobody

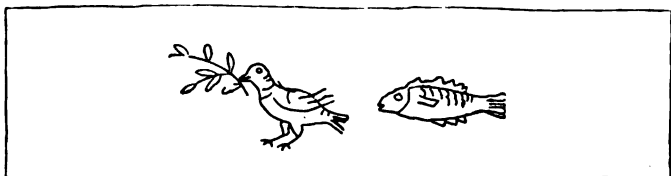
doubts," says St. Augustine¹—and Tertullian and St. Cyprian had said the same before him—"Nobody doubts that the Church was typified in the ark of Noe, though this might have appeared a mere conjecture of man's imagination, had not the Apostle Peter expressly declared it in his Epistle."² The survivors, therefore, of Juliana, and of every other person buried in the Catacombs on whose tombs this story was told, meant to express their sure faith and hope that their departed friend, having been received into the Church by baptism, and lived a faithful member of it, had died in the peace of God, and had now entered into his rest.

Thus the dove with the olive branch was in fact equivalent to what we have seen to be one of the most common written epitaphs, *Spiritus tuus in pace*. But there was also another form of this epitaph, *Spiritus tuus in pace et in Christo*; and this too is exactly expressed pictorially, when the dove is found with the monogram, as in the following, which is at the end

Bull., 1874, p. 65.



of an inscription on the *mensa* of an *arcosolium* in the Cemetery of St. Soteris, or with the fish, as on a stone found in the most

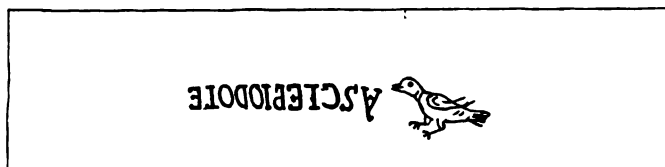


ancient part of the Catacomb of St. Priscilla, without any words at all. In another from the same place, the dove seems to have been added, as a sort of afterthought, by way of correcting in some degree the blunder of the fossor who had fixed the stone in its place upside down.

¹ De Unit. Eccl., 9.

² I., iii. 20, 21.

Of course the dove was primarily (as being suggested by the manifestation at our Lord's Baptism) a type of the Holy Ghost. But this did not in any way militate against its being used also



as an emblem of a Christian soul. On the contrary, as the very name and title of the Holy Spirit was given to those souls in whom He dwelt (of which we have seen several examples), so it was only natural that there should be the same double use of the symbols also. Sometimes, therefore, the dove appears on the gravestones side by side with the words *Palumbulus sine felle*, or with its equivalent, *Anima innocens*, *anima simplex*, &c. In one epitaph, belonging to a double grave, the names of the deceased are written over the heads of two doves, Beneria and Sabbatis. In another, a dove sits on the mast-head of a vessel, and around its head is written, "Whose soul has been received by God" (*Cujus spiritus a Deo* I.C., p. 421. *acceptus est*, for *acceptus*). Sometimes it is represented with the Bull., 1864, p. 11. *R.S., iii. p. 11.* palm branch in addition to the olive, or instead of it—*i.e.*, the idea of victory is introduced as well as peace.



ΑΦΦΙΛΛΑ

ΘΕΟΦΙΛΟC

ΑΦΦΙΑΝΟ



"Affilla Theophilus to Affianus."

Sometimes the same idea is suggested by carving the dove with a wreath or crown in its beak; and De Rossi quotes very appositely (from the genuine Acts of certain Greek vir-

L

gins who suffered martyrdom at Corinth, which have been recently published by Cardinal Pitra), a vision, in which one of them saw on the night before their martyrdom the Holy Ghost coming down from heaven bearing the crown of victory, to strengthen and encourage her for the conflict. Sometimes the dove is drinking out of a vase, or pecking at grapes, as



though to denote the soul's enjoyment of the fruits and refreshing streams of eternal happiness in Paradise.¹ In a word, the representations of the dove on the tombstones of the Catacombs are simply innumerable, and they occur in every variety of position and action, none of which are at all difficult to understand.

The anchor.

xvi. 45, 46.

In No. 6 of our selection an anchor appears on the epitaph of a double grave, in which one of the persons buried had the name of Elpis, or Hope. It appears also on other stones in the Lateran Gallery, and in a large number of ancient Christian epitaphs collected in books, belonging to persons bearing this same name, either in Latin or Greek, and in some one or other of its forms—Spes, Elpis, Elpidius, Elpizusa. Moreover, these epitaphs are found to be specially numerous in the most ancient parts of the Catacombs. And indeed St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews,² and the instruction of Clement of Alexandria,³ are sufficient to satisfy us both as to the meaning of this symbol, and also the antiquity of its use. Sometimes it was so formed, evidently by design, as to suggest to the Christian eye the idea of the Cross, the very foundation of Christian hope; and in some epitaphs it is united with the fish in a very striking and significant way. Indeed, these two symbols are found together

Fish.

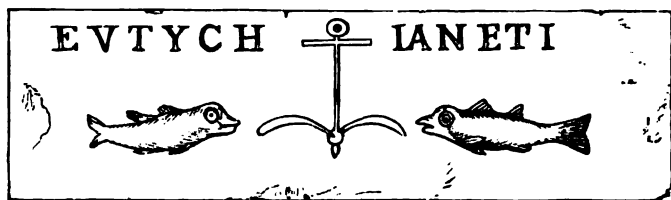
¹ See St. Aug., Conf., ix. 3.

² vi. 19.

³ Pædagog., iii. 106.

on more than twenty gravestones of the Catacombs, to say nothing of engraved gems, in which class of monuments they are almost inseparable. Perhaps it was the connection of both of them with the sea which caused this association of ideas. Anyhow the result is most happy, for it becomes equivalent to those words so often inscribed on the earliest epitaphs, SPES IN CHRISTO, SPES IN DEO, SPES IN DEO CHRISTO. The only difference is that in the one case the idea is expressed alphabetically, in the other by hieroglyphics; and the latter has this advantage over the other, that it suggests also the idea of the Cross, apart from which Christian hope has no foundation.

We have already explained the double meaning of the fish, and in this example, the combination of the fish (in



its secondary sense) with the anchor is very suggestive of Christian thought. It brings to our minds the words of our Blessed Lord, that "when He was lifted up on the Cross, He would draw all men unto Him;" the fish are here Christian souls swimming towards that which is the centre and loadstone of their affections, the Cross of Christ. Sometimes other symbols are united with the anchor in a less striking way, though doubtless not without a definite hidden meaning on the part of those who inscribed them; as in this, from the very ancient crypt of Lucina; the union of the cross-shaped anchor, the sheep and the dove, seems to proclaim one of the fold of Christ redeemed by His Cross, in which he had placed all his hope, and now released from the bonds of the flesh and entered into everlasting rest. Still more numerous symbols are crowded together on the next, which is probably quite as ancient as

the last, if not more so. It is engraved on the centre of a sarcophagus which was found near the Confession of St. Peter.



Bull., 1873,
tav. v.

In modern times it had formed a part of the Campana Collection, whence it has found its way to Paris.



Peacock.

Other symbols more rarely used are such as the peacock in No. 11, which was a recognised emblem of immortality; and the ship approaching a lighthouse in the following (and in an-

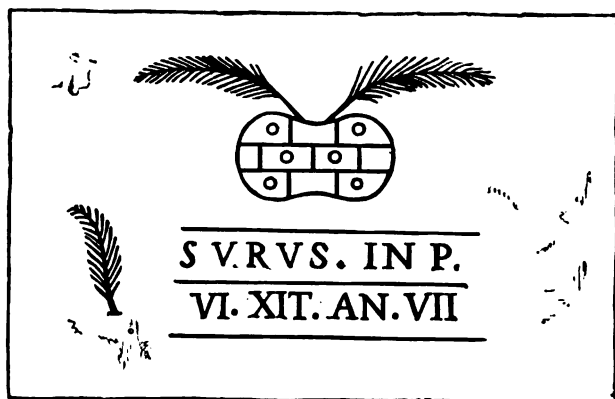
Lighthouse.

other which stands next to this in the Lateran Museum). This seems intended to suggest the idea that the soul of the



deceased is like a ship which has escaped all the perils of its voyage, and is now happily entering the haven of rest.

Another subject more frequently repeated is of wreaths, Crowns, garlands, and crowns, either alone or held in the beaks of birds; and on other Christian monuments, *e.g.*, on the gilded



glasses of the fourth century, held over the heads of the saints by our Blessed Lord, or (in mosaics) by the hand of God issuing out of a cloud. All these have manifest reference to the prizes awarded to successful athletes and other competitors in the Pythian and Olympic games, and to the corresponding

labours and contests against spiritual enemies which make up the trial of a Christian life. It is only a pictorial representation of the same symbolical language that is used more than once by St. Paul; as when he bids his Corinthian converts "so run that they may obtain," or instructs St. Timothy that "he that striveth for the mastery must strive lawfully," or says concerning himself, that he has "fought a good fight and finished his course, so that there is now laid up for him a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just judge, will render to him in that day, and not only to him, but to them also that love His coming."¹

Horse.

L.M., xv. 51.

Bull., 1867, p. 82;
1873, p. 69.

The same explanation must be given also of the representation of a horse, which appears on a few Christian monuments; a horse at full speed running towards a palm branch or to the monogram of Christ. And it was doubtless under the influence of the same idea that the name Agathopus, "excellent of foot," became a favourite among the faithful. This view of the Christian life was likely to be specially present to men who were familiar on the one hand with the continual races, wrestlings, and other contests of athletes, and the gladiatorial combats; and, on the other hand, lived from day to day in constant apprehension of being called upon to confess the faith in the face of tortures and death itself, often in the same arena.

Cross.

Another symbol (so to call it) of which we must give some account is the sign of the cross. We need not quote the well-known passages of Tertullian and others which show the love of the early Christians for this sign of our salvation, and their frequent use of it. They were said to be *crucis religiosi*,² and it was known as the *signum Christi*, *signum immortale*, *signum celeste Dei*, τὸ κυριακὸν σημεῖον.³ But there were obvious reasons why it should not be fully exposed to public gaze before an unbelieving world. Death by means of a cross was specially ignominious as being a punishment reserved for slaves; and

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 24; 2 Tim. ii. 5, iv. 7.

² Apolog. c. 16.

³ Clem. Alex. Stromata, vi. 11; Lactant. de Mort Persec., cc. x. xliv.

the famous caricature of the Crucifixion, scratched on a wall on the Palatine, is a sufficient proof of the use the Pagans were likely to make of this corner-stone of the Gospel history when brought before them. Nevertheless, where Christian symbols were used at all, it would have been hard to exclude this in some form or other.

We have already mentioned that the anchor was often so fashioned on ancient Christian epitaphs as to suggest this form to an instructed mind. A similar use seems to have been made of the trident also; certainly of the forms of the masts and yards of a ship, and of the sticks or stems among garlands of flowers. But these belong to the paintings rather than to the epitaphs of the Catacombs. A form under which it appears in inscriptions is the letter T. Tertullian, quoting Ezech. ix. 4, *Signa Tau super frontes*, &c., says: "Now the Greek letter Tau and our own T is the very form of the cross, which he predicted should be the sign on our foreheads in the true Catholic Jerusalem."¹ Hence we see examples of this in the Catacombs—e.g., in an inscription IRETNE, lately discovered in a part of the Catacomb of San Callisto, belonging to the third century, and in another from the same place,

Bull., 1863,
pp. 12-35.
R.S., ii. 319.

AΦΡΟΔΙCIC
T

and also in the monogram of TYRANIO on a sarcophagus; in



which the prominence given to the letter T evidently has a symbolical significance. We even find the letter itself in-

¹ C. Marc., iii. 22. The number 300 being expressed in Greek by this letter Tau, came itself, even in apostolic times, to be regarded as equivalent to the cross. See Barnab. Ep. Cath., c. 9, ed. Hefele, p. 22.

scribed alone, or in combination with the letter P, on a tombstone.

In the most ancient part of the lowest *piano* in the crypts of Lucina we meet with a grave with the inscription

POTΦINA
KIPHNH

with a simple equilateral cross (*a*) beneath the latter name. The same sign is virtually contained also in the figure *b*, which



occurs on an inscription of the year 268 or 279, as well as upon others not bearing certain dates. But this was probably intended merely as a combination of the first letters of the two words Jesus Christ in Greek, I X, and was therefore rather a compendious form of writing than a symbol properly so called.

R.S., ii. 330.
I.C., p. 16.

Monograms.

The Constantinian monogram, as it is commonly called (*c*), formed of the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ, the X with the P, seems to have been used at first in the same way, merely as a contracted form of the name, even before the triumph of Constantine. It is true that the few dated inscriptions before that event do not supply us with any specimen of it. But it has been found scratched on the plaster side by side with the earlier forms (*a* and *b*), both in San Callisto and the Catacomb of St. Agnes, in galleries which bear every sign of being prior to the time of Constantine. It is also found engraved in inscriptions, and nearly always under such circumstances that it cannot be treated as a merely ornamental addition, but must be read as an integral part of the inscription—*e.g.*, VIVAS IN DEO ET , DEO SANCTO UNI, &c. Other Greek names were not unfrequently abridged at this time into monogrammatic signs; and why should not the names of Christ have been similarly treated?

This form of the monogram, and also the simple Greek cross, appear on the coins of Constantine ; and after his time we meet with the modifications of it *d*, *e*, and *f*, but especially the latter, which became the recognised triumphal form of the cross. It was a slight modification of a way of writing the Greek Rho, which is met with on some old Greek inscriptions and on medals of Herod the Great. In some instances the figure is reversed as in *g*, or placed obliquely as in *h* and *i*, but these were probably due to individual caprice, and had no special meaning. From the middle of the fourth century, it is usually flanked on either side by the letters Alpha and Omega. Once or twice we find on tombs in the Catacombs a monogram formed from the union of  and the letter N, being intended, apparently, for the initials of the words XPICTOC NIKA, *Christ conquers*, and belonging, of course, to post-Constantinian times.

A form of the cross (*k*) which is sometimes found both in *Bull.*, 1873, p. 60. paintings and on epitaphs after the middle of the third century is composed of a fourfold repetition of the Greek Γ ; *Crux gammata*. and because the symbol thus formed was in use among the Brahmins, Buddhists, and in other Oriental superstitions, some French writers have attempted to establish an historical connection between them and the Christian religion. It has *R.S.*, ii. 318. been demonstrated, however, by De Rossi, that this *crux* *Bull.*, 1868, p. 91. *gammata*, as it is called, was no stranger even in Western Europe. It is found on Greek coins in Corinth and in Sicily, and was in a Samnite tomb, and in Rome itself. It was no spontaneous invention of the early Christians, no fruit of their own traditions ; neither did they borrow it from any Oriental source. It was in use in their neighbourhood, and they gladly availed themselves of it, as of any other disguised forms of a figure so dear to them, which yet they did not dare to display openly. In Italy, they did not begin to use the plain Latin cross till about the beginning of the fifth century. In Africa, however,

it had been used much earlier, and by the end of the sixth century it was very common everywhere.¹

Besides mere artistic symbols, Scriptural histories are also sometimes figured on the tombstones of the Catacombs, but of course in a very condensed form, and by allusion rather than by actual representation, and with the same reference to their doctrinal meaning; the resurrection of Lazarus, for example, or a scene from the history of Jonas, as prefiguring and giving us an assurance of our own resurrection. It is not so easy to suggest the reason for selecting the scene depicted on No. 14, the adoration by the wise men of the Holy Child Jesus on His Mother's knee. But in the representations of SS. Peter and Paul in No. 16, of which there are four or five other examples in the Lateran Museum, there is no doubt that the survivors desired to recommend the deceased to the prayers of those apostles, that they might be made worthy to enter into their company. They were an equivalent to those acclamations we have seen addressed in words to others of "the noble army of martyrs."

xiv. 42-47.

(2.) Civil.

Sculptor.

Carpenter.

Blacksmith.

R., S., ii. xlv. 55.

Fisherman.

The second, but by no means so numerous a class of symbolical representations on the tombstones of the Catacombs, has no reference to the Christian faith of the deceased, but only to his profession or occupation in the world during life. Thus Mœcius Aprilis (in No. 1 of our selection), who was buried in the Cemetery of Cyriaca, was both called a maker of statues or images in the inscription, and we should have gathered the same from the instruments of his labour which are figured at either end of the epitaph. The same instruments must have been intended to tell the same story in No. 2 also, whilst the saw and hatchet in No. 4 seem rather to denote a carpenter. The bellows and anvil in No. 5 manifestly belong to a blacksmith; and another example of the same trade, similarly represented, has been found in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus. We can hardly be wrong in conjecturing that Antissius Crescens,

¹ De Rossi, *De Titulis Carthag.* apud Spicil. Solesmn., iv.

whose two sons set up the inscription No. 10, was a fisherman. Other inscriptions of the same kind in the Lateran Museum set before us a carder of wool, a marble-cutter, a dealer in corn or a baker—the symbol is a measure of corn—and representatives of some other trades, not all of which, however, can be determined with certainty.

Fabretti has preserved to us from one of the Catacombs the monument of a maker of sarcophagi, to which De Rossi says it is impossible to assign a date later than the third century. *R.S., iii. 443.*
Maker of sarcophagi.



On it is represented a man in the act of making some of the ornamental work of a sarcophagus with a pointed instrument, which a boy is rapidly turning by means of a strap or cord, the two ends of which are in his hands. A finished sarcophagus of a smaller size stands by, with the name Eutropus upon it in Greek letters. It is worth observing that on neither of these sarcophagi is there any Pagan figure; on one there are only the spiral or wavy lines common on such monuments, and two lions' heads; and the other is still plainer, the name and four swimming dolphins. But the Christian profession of the sculptor is put beyond question by the dove with the olive branch in the corner, and an inscription, in which the son of Eutropus, who made the monument, calls his father holy, and "a worshipper of God," and adds the Christian formula *In pace*.

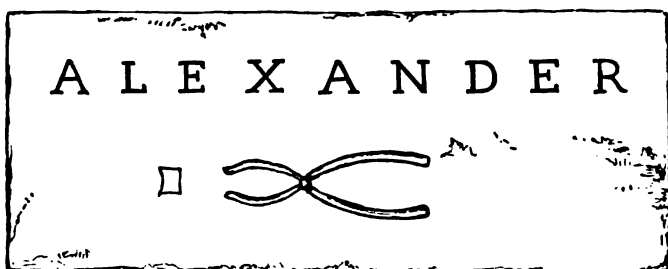
In the recent excavations round the Basilica of San Lorenzo Surgeon. *fuori le mura* part of an inscription came to light, engraved on a very heavy stone, which certainly never closed a grave in the

Catacombs, but must have belonged to the cemetery above ground. Nevertheless we give a figure of it here for the sake of the instruments which are upon it. The inscription tells us



of some person whose name ended in *inus* (Victorinus, Celerinus, or some other), who during his lifetime made this tomb for himself at his own expense,¹ and then the two instruments are engraved which our readers see. In one of them it is impossible not to recognise another example of an instrument which had been found in 1714 on the gravestone of one Alexander, in the Cemetery of Calepodius, and concerning

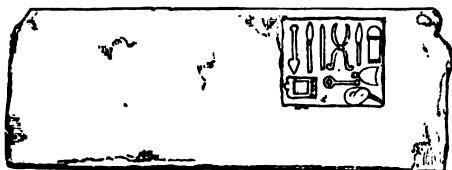
Dentist.



which Boldetti had conjectured that it might not possibly be meant for an instrument of martyrdom. He acknowledged, however, that this was very doubtful, and immediately went on to produce other inscriptions in which the emblems or imple-

¹ εαυτῷ ΑΙΠΟΙΗCΑ for εποίησα.

ments of different trades were represented. We think he may very well be excused for not recognising a dentist's forceps and the tooth which it had extracted, and that the whole inscription was simply equivalent to "Alexander, the Dentist." But in the other example, the tooth appears still grasped by the successful instrument, and another instrument of a dentist's profession is by its side. In 1851 De Rossi was present when a stone was dug out of the Cemetery of Pretextatus, which had closed a Christian grave fifteen hundred years before, and on it, instead of a name, was a representation of a whole case of surgical instruments, amongst which the same two appear; and



then, to complete the demonstration, De Rossi is able to add that he has seen the very same case of instruments engraved on an ancient monument in Palestrina, to the memory of one P. Ælius Pius Curtianus, who is expressly called a *medicus*. O.H., 7426.

This was a Pagan monument, and other similar representations are to be found in all large collections of monuments of any class, as they are the mere reflection of civil and social life—*e.g.*, on how many English monuments do we find the sword, the gun, and the banner as the insignia of military service, or an anchor on the tombs of sailors, a palette and brush on the painters', &c. Still it is certainly not altogether in harmony with the spirit which dictated the great bulk of the epitaphs in the Catacombs; for, as a general rule, all mention of worldly interests and occupations is as rigorously excluded from these as titles which minister to pride and vanity. There will always be some exceptions, however, to these rules; and in his last volume of "Roma Sotterranea" De Rossi has given us from an *arcosolium* in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus the

picture of a woman standing surrounded with benches and tables covered with vegetables, which he interprets as indicating the nature of her business followed during life by the person whose tomb it ornaments; and Bosio had long since given us an epitaph from the Cemetery of Domitilla of a woman "who sold barley in New Street" (*vendidit horreum de Biâ Nobâ*).

Soldiers. Whilst upon the subject of trades and professions recorded on Christian tombstones, it is worth mentioning that there was discovered a few years ago in the Villa Patrizi, outside the Porta Pia, a small subterranean cemetery, which De Rossi was almost disposed to believe was peculiar to Christian soldiers, the barracks being situated at no great distance. One of the inscriptions, scratched apparently with some iron instrument by the inexperienced hand of a comrade, ran as follows:—

[DION]ISIUS MILIX COH S(EXTÆ?)
STUS FRATER FRATRI
EMERENTI FOSUIT QUI V
ANNIS XXX IN JACE.

He observes that the barbarisms on the epitaphs of the Pagan members of the Prætorian Guard were hardly less glaring or frequent than on this fragment of a Christian epitaph. He also says that he has found several other inscriptions of Christian soldiers, which is only what we should have expected from the distinct testimony of Tertullian, whilst yet a Catholic, that Christians were to be found both in the army and navy. "We sail with you," he says, when addressing his Apology to heathen readers, "and we fight with you;" and in another place he enumerates the camp in the list of places which were already full of Christians, "leaving nothing to the undisturbed possession of the heathen except their temples and theatres."¹

(3.) Nominal. The third class of symbolical representations is almost too trifling to deserve mention; but it has always found favour with some persons, whether Pagan or Christian, Greek or

¹ Apol., cc. 37, 42. See also De Coronâ, i.

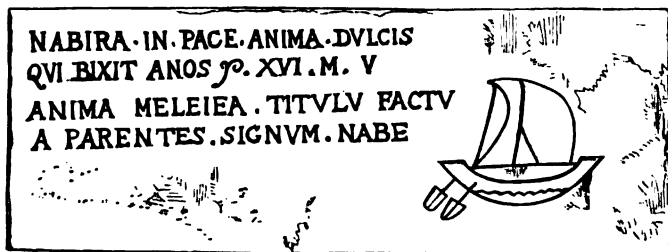
Roman. We allude to those which are merely nominal, or figured representations of the name.

It was not at all an uncommon practice among the old Romans to choose a device or a trade-mark on this principle—*e.g.*, tiles or terra-cotta vessels made on the estates of Flavius Aper (*ex prædiis Fl. Apri*) are marked with a wild boar, and those of Stephanus with a crown. They did the same also on their sepulchral monuments.

Used by
Pagans in
Greece and
Rome.

An inscription on a Pagan sepulchre on the Via Appia, to the memory of one M. Antonius M. L. Philomusus, adds after this last name the monosyllable *mus*, as though this had been its familiar abbreviation, and then carves at the side two figures of a mouse (*mus*).¹ In the same way in Athens the tomb of one Leo is ornamented with a lion; so in the Roman Catacombs was the epitaph of one Pontius Leo (in No. 3 of our selection), and a little pig is added to that of a child named Porcella (in No. 8). Boldetti gives one with the figure of a donkey, the man's name being Onager; and Marangoni² another, *Spiritus Caprioles in pace*, with the figure of a goat at the side. And in the following example the ship seems to have been selected as the *signum* or token whereby the parents might recognise the grave of their daughter, aged sixteen, because of its connection with her name, Navira.

Christian
examples.
p. 428.



"Navira, in peace, a sweet soul, who lived sixteen years five months, a soul sweet as honey. The epitaph is put up by her parents. The sign a ship."

¹ Pitture e sepolcri scoperti sull' Esquilino nell' 1875. Par Eduardo Brizio, p. 25.

² Acta St. Victorini, p. 102.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

Inscriptions of Pope Damasus—Chief characteristics of Christian epitaphs, their hopefulness—They reflect contemporary history and general state of Christian thought and feeling at different periods—Ancient Christian epitaphs in other countries; Great Britain, Spain, and Gaul—Conclusion.

Inscriptions
of Pope
Damasus.

THERE was once a very interesting class of inscriptions in the Catacombs (and one or two specimens, as well as a few fragments of some others, may still be seen there), to which we have scarcely made any allusion in these pages; those, we mean, which were set up on the tombs of the martyrs by Pope Damasus in the latter half of the fourth century. They are in every point of view of great value and importance, and deserve a treatise by themselves; but they can hardly be called epitaphs, in the usual acceptance of the word, and the consideration of them belongs rather to the history of the Catacombs than to that branch of the subject which we have been handling in this volume. We have desired to confine ourselves to a study of the more simple and original epitaphs—those which owed their origin to the affection and piety of private individuals, and which only undesignedly threw any light upon the tone of thought and feeling prevalent in the community to which their writers belonged. The inscriptions of Pope Damasus were public monuments set up by authority, and intended *ad perpetuam rei memoriam*; the epitaphs with which we have been concerned were, like those in our own village churchyards, simple chronicles of the dead, each of which, if taken alone, is trifling

enough, but when studied all together, accidentally make interesting and unlooked-for revelations.

We compared them first with Pagan memorials of the same class, and marked their points of difference. We saw that in the beginning these consisted in an omission of what had been usual rather than in the introduction of anything new; that Christian epigraphy, like Christian art in its earliest period, bore close resemblance to the corresponding monuments of Paganism, excepting in those particulars in which the new doctrines either necessarily and at once, or else naturally in the course of time, produced a change. Some of these particulars were not such, perhaps, as we should have expected beforehand, but now that we observe them, we find it easy to account for them; we allude to the disuse of some of the family names, the omission of the names of parents or other survivors who put up the epitaph, the silence as to country, profession and civil *status*, &c. Next we noted the absence of any extravagant outbursts of grief, of murmuring, and rebellion against the dispensations of Providence, and still more remarkably, perhaps, of those retrospects of past enjoyments which are so common on Pagan monuments. We hope we have not given our readers an exaggerated idea of these points of difference; we certainly had no desire to do so. We have studied with close attention several thousands of Pagan epitaphs, and where a little life and display of personal character breaks in on the cold formality which is their general characteristic, we have been as often touched by the voice of nature which speaks in them as shocked by the impiety of their language, or saddened by its frivolity, and still more by its despairing hopelessness. If we have not given such numerous examples of the one class as of the other, this has been because we thought it might be taken for granted.

St. Paul has struck the keynote of the essential difference between Pagan and Christian epitaphs when he bids his Thes-
salonian converts "not to be sorrowful concerning them that

Chief characteristic of Christian epitaphs.

Their hopefulness.

M

are asleep, even as others who have no hope." Pagan epitaphs, as we have said, looked back upon the past, and regretted its loss; Christian epitaphs, by the very earliest symbol engraved upon them, spoke the language of hope. If a Pagan mourner dared to look forward at all, it was to utter a feeble wish that he might be allowed to enjoy, as it were, a cold and gloomy repetition, a faint echo or image, of the present life; the Christian prayed for a new and everlasting life in God. The Pagan widow or widower appealed to the Manes that they would put an end to the hateful separation which a cruel fate had made, by bringing about the speedy release of the survivor. A Christian under the same circumstances prayed that the dear departed one might be received among the saints, live with them for ever, and make continual intercession for the one left behind. And this note of difference is to be seen from the very first; the symbols of the dove, the anchor, and the fish, and the acclamations *Vivas in Deo*, *Vivas inter sanctos*, are found on most certain monuments of primitive Christianity. As time went on, these pious ejaculations were still further developed; and so, step by step, a special style of Christian epigraphy grew up, instinct with the light of hope and faith. This became the generally accepted type, varying indeed, as all things human never fail to vary, in some minor details, according to circumstances of time and place, or the peculiar tastes and fancies of this or that individual, yet sufficiently consistent to set a distinctive mark upon each particular period, whilst by its variations during successive ages it faithfully reflects (we may be sure) some corresponding change in the tone and temper of the ordinary Christian mind.

They reflect
contemporary
history.

Indeed, it is quite curious to observe how accurately the character of the times is often reflected in Christian epigraphy. Even their secular history leaves its stamp upon it. Thus, when De Rossi has come in the middle of his volume to the year 410, and finds that he has no inscription to record of

that year, he exclaims, "Why is this? From the end of the reign of Constantine we have had a continual and sufficiently abundant succession; why is it that for this year a new era, as it were, seems to begin in the history of Roman inscriptions? Now they become more rare; the series goes on with a doubtful, halting step, and very often is altogether stopped; so that in those years which are the nearest to this fatal epoch, there are either very few or absolutely none. Thus, only two or three can be assigned to the year 411 and 412; to the next two years, probably none; from 415 to 418, one for each year perhaps; in 419, three; in 420, probably not one; in 421, certainly none. The cause of this sudden change can only be found in the history of the time. It is evident that this sudden interruption and dearth of monuments portends some great change and disturbance in public affairs." In fact, it is contemporaneous with the attack of Alaric, by which the city suffered almost total ruin, and its records are henceforth marked by sieges, fires, and devastation. Again, at the end of this volume we have another interesting example of this admirable correspondence between the known facts of history and the phenomena presented by the monumental remains that have been preserved to us. He has just registered his last epitaph, belonging to the year 589. "And now," he says, "I seem to be gathering the last relics of the *res epigraphica* of Rome, which had been gradually dying, and indeed was almost dead from about the middle of this (sixth) century. Now I have come to that point where there are no longer even scanty relics to be found; for from the year 589 to the year 600, which is the limit I have prescribed to myself, I can find no Roman epitaph bearing any certain note of its date. The truth is, that during these years the overwhelming calamities of Rome had so passed all limits, that the few citizens who survived for tears and mourning were kept in such a continual state of amazement and distress that their life was more miserable than death. Drowned by inundations of the Tiber, con-

sumed by a terrible pestilence, they had to bear continual attacks from the Lombards during the whole of these ten years ; and how great was the misery and destruction they suffered from these evils we can learn from Gregory, truly called The Great, the last of the ancient Romans." After quoting the well-known passages from St. Gregory's Commentary on Ezechiel, he concludes, "These groans of the great St. Gregory from amid the well-nigh empty city still sound in our ears ; all the rest is silent, and now even the very graves themselves no longer give forth a voice." He then shows how the same dearth of monuments characterises the next century also, and from the same causes, scarcely more than half-a-dozen monuments bearing dates having been found in Christian Rome for the whole of the seventh century.

And general
state of Chris-
tian thought
and feeling.

Arguing from the same premises, and proceeding with great caution, we cannot help forming some idea as to the general tone of faith and piety among the Christian community at different periods. One may say that nearly the whole of Christian sepulchral epigraphy testifies at least to one Christian doctrine, the doctrine of a future resurrection. *Fiducia Christianorum, resurrectio mortuorum*, says Tertullian, and the language of all the formularies of ancient epitaphs is inspired and impregnated by this confidence. The words *depositus* and *depositio*, instead of *sepultus*, repeated thousands upon thousands of times, proclaims the temporal character of the deposit intrusted to the grave ; the words *cæmeterium, dormit, quiescit, jacet in somno, in sopore pacis*, though some of them may have been (very rarely) suggested to Heathen poets by the natural resemblance between death and sleep, yet on Christian gravestones distinctly affirm the same faith, because "on sleeping there follows a wakening and a getting up."¹ Then besides this fundamental doctrine, which can hardly fail to be present to the mind of every Christian under any circumstances when he is consigning the body to the grave,

¹ St. Paulinus, Ep. xxxvii. ad Pammachium.

there were in those days of persecution—whilst yet the Christian community was small, all its members most intimately knit together under the pressure of persecution, and with the light of faith shining brightly in their souls, there were—other thoughts of love and hope which rose spontaneously to the heart, and were too strong to be repressed; thoughts of a communion still persisting with the deceased, though now carried on under new conditions, and finding its joy and consolation in incessant mutual prayer. The Pagans at such a moment could only utter a heartrending farewell; to the Christians it rarely occurred to utter that word at all, or, if they did, they accompanied it by some additional phrase which robbed it of its sting of bitterness and desolation, and entirely changed its tone; as, for instance, “Flavius Crispinus to his wife Aurelia Anianes, who lived twenty-eight years, whom I had as a wife for nine years, in love, without any quarrelling” (*lesione animi*),

VALE MIHI KARA IN PACE CUM SPIRITA XANTA VALE IN ✠ R.S., iii. 132.

“Farewell, my dear one, in peace, with the holy souls.
Farewell in Christ.”

In Christ she still lived; in Christ he lived also. In Him, therefore, they were still united, and one could pray for the other.

But in the age of peace, these beautiful formulas, so simple and spontaneous, and so full both of faith and love, were rapidly exchanged for language more or less rhetorical, and other formulas of historical and conventional type. It is scarcely possible to avoid the inference that this change is evidence of a certain depreciation of the general standard of faith and piety amongst the Christians of the fourth and fifth centuries as compared with those of the preceding period. We find amongst the later epitaphs abundant panegyrics of the wisdom, goodness, and innocence of the deceased, but few prayers for his acceptance among the saints. Many widows

At different periods.

and widowers bear testimony to the gentleness and amiability of their consorts, whereby they have been able to live together for long terms of years in perfect harmony, but it does not seem to occur to the survivor to ask for the prayers of the one who has gone before. Children, too, are commended for their innocence and simplicity, but they are not asked to pray for their parents, or for brothers and sisters who survive them ; and of the dead generally it is not said that they have gone before in peace, or that they have rendered up their souls to God, or that they have been summoned by Him, or fetched by His angels ; neither is it asked that henceforth they may live in God, but the bare record is inscribed upon the stone that they died on such a day, *decessit*, or (in the fifth century and afterwards) that they lie here, *Hic jacet, hic quiescit, or requiescit*. Of course, it is not meant that they did not think or feel all these things ; but at any rate, the thought and feeling was not so strong and vivid in their minds as to be under any necessity of expression ; it did not find vent in the epitaphs.

The general distinction between the two styles of epigraphy, the one before the age of Constantine, the other after it, is a fact of great significance. It is a fact which has only recently been gained to the domain of science by the immense labours and scrupulous accuracy of De Rossi, but it is daily receiving fresh confirmation by the attentive examination of the hundreds of stones which every year brings to light. However, each of these periods is made up of several centuries, and we may confidently expect that the progress of studies and observations will enable us before long to distinguish different groups and families of inscriptions peculiar to each succeeding age. This has already been done in part with reference to the post-Constantinian period, where the number of dated inscriptions makes the work easier. It would be more valuable with reference to the earlier ages ; and De Rossi holds out good hopes of our attaining such knowledge by means of the

topographical distinction of the epitaphs, combined with our daily increasing certainty as to the chronology of the several regions of the Catacombs.

It would have been interesting to study the development of Ancient Christian epigraphy in other places as compared with Rome; but the materials for such a comparison do not exist. We have been able, indeed, in the preceding pages occasionally to quote a foreign contemporary epitaph in illustration of some Roman monument, but these are rare and valuable exceptions. No country can compete with Rome either in the number or importance of its ancient Christian memorials; and the reason is obvious, because in no other place have they enjoyed so efficient a protection as in the Catacombs. A few have been similarly preserved in Naples, and in the venerable cemetery of the Aliscamps (or Elysian field) at Arles, and in other ancient cemeteries of the valley of the Rhone; and modern scholars are seeking to rescue from oblivion and destruction all the fragments that remain, and by gathering them together into distinct geographical sections, they are doing good service both to church history and to archæology. The most important contribution of this kind has been made in the inscriptions of Gaul by M. Le Blant. It consists of more than 700 examples, but then his chronological limit extends to the end of the seventh century, a hundred years later than De Rossi's, neither is it confined geographically within the present boundaries of his country, but comprehends all regions west of the Rhine and the Alps. From Spain, Hubner has only been able to gather 300, though he extended the limit of time yet another century; and the number collected from our own country by the same scholar is still smaller, even with the addition of some of the ninth and tenth centuries.

If we look to the contents and to the antiquity of these monuments as compared with those of the Roman type, their inferiority becomes still more conspicuous. In Great Britain it is doubtful whether a single specimen can lay claim

to a date earlier than the sixth century. There is a total absence of the ordinary Christian symbols, such as birds, fish, the anchor, or the palm. Only one or two types of the cross appear. *In pace* is found once (on a stone in the churchyard of Llanerfil, fourteen miles from Welshpool, in Montgomeryshire), *Hic in tumulo jacit Restice filia Paternini an xiii in pa[ce]*.¹ An equilateral cross, with the upper limb imperfectly shaped into a Rho, so as to give somewhat the appearance of the monogram, and enclosed within a circle, with Alpha and Omega above it, is to be seen in the walls of the burying-ground of Kirkmadrine, on the west side of the bay of Luce, in Wigtownshire, with an inscription which Hubner attributes to the fifth or sixth century, *Hic jacent sci [sancti] et præcipui sacerdotes, id est Vincentius et Majorius*.² And these are really the only points on which the scanty remains of ancient Christianity in this country touch the corresponding monuments in Rome. The favourite British formula was manifestly *Hic in tumulo jacit*, or *Hic jacit*. A large number of the epitaphs begin with these words, and *jacet* is uniformly thus misspelt. The age and the condition of the deceased are rarely recorded.

Spain.

The Christian monuments of Spain present, as might have been expected, more numerous points of resemblance to the ancient Roman type. But these too, with very few exceptions, are of later date than the fifth century. The fish is said to have been found inscribed on the beginning of an inscription not earlier than the latter part of the sixth century; it appears immediately under the monogram, and the deceased, who had lived to the age of seventy-one, is called *famulus Dei*, and is said to have "rested in peace" on such a day, *Acceptâ pœnitentiâ*.³ The genuineness of this inscription, however, is not altogether free from doubt, and in our own judgment the fish alone is enough to condemn it. In nine or ten epitaphs,

¹ Inscript. Brit. Christ., ed. Hubner, No. 125, p. 43.

² Ibid., No. 205, p. 74.

³ Inscript. Hisp. Christ., Hubner, No. 43, p. 13.

belonging to the first quarter of the same century,¹ two doves appear, one on either side of the monogram, to which are generally attached the letters Alpha and Omega. *In hoc tumultu jacet* is sometimes found, but *Recessit in pace* is the formula in most frequent use, and in a few instances either half of this formula stands alone.² The length of life or of married life is usually mentioned with considerable accuracy, and the title *famulus Dei* is of frequent recurrence. A few tiles have been *Marciane vivas in* ✠ *Spes in Deo*; but of course we cannot

found in Spain³ impressed with the very ancient acclamations, be certain that these were of native manufacture; and the same must be said of the gold ring found in our own country (at Brancaster, near Norfolk), on which two heads were rudely engraved between the words *Vivas in Deo*.⁴

Gaul.

Among the Christian inscriptions of Gaul there are six bearing date, five of which fall properly within the limits of our inquiry, but they do not make any valuable contribution to our knowledge. The earliest belongs to the year 334, but beyond the date it contains nothing but the words *Depos. Silentiosis*. The second, thirteen years later, is of a priest named Patroclus,

L.B., No. 62.

No. 596.

In pace. ✠ The third, thirty years later still, is not an epitaph, but an inscription testifying to the restoration, on an enlarged scale, of some public building (*longe præstantius illis quæ prisce steterant*), and it is remarkable as being the most ancient example of the Christian monogram inscribed on a public monument which was not a church. The monogram has the Alpha and Omega on either side of it, and the stone is still preserved in the Hotel de Ville at Sion. The fourth came from the ancient cemetery at Autun. It was "to the eternal memory of a child named Quieta, who only lived one year, three days, and eight hours, and who died (*decessit*) on the 25th of October, A.D. 378." The fifth attests the *depositio* of

No. 369.

Bull., 1867, p. 25.

L.B., No. 7.

No. 591.

¹ Inscript. Hisp. Christ., Hubner, No. 43, p. 13.

² P. ix.

³ P. 66.

⁴ Insc. Brit. Christ., p. 81.

another child named Adelphus, to whom the father and mother inscribed the memorial, A.D. 405. The sixth and last, A.D. 409, is in Greek, and records the burial of a girl aged fifteen, who "lies here in peace," 'ENΘΑ KEITE EN EIPINI.

No. 248.

We must not conclude from the extreme paucity of these dated monuments that all the Christian inscriptions of Gaul are of a later date. We have said that there are more than 700 inscriptions in all, and only about 170 are dated. Their chronology must therefore be determined by other tests; and it seems probable that a few, belonging to the south and south-east, Lyons, Arles, Vienne, and Marseilles, are as old as the third century, many more of the fourth and fifth; and it is announced as the result of very careful observation, that the phrases and symbols used on these ancient epitaphs follow the same chronological order of succession as in Rome, only they begin and end in the province much later than in the metropolis. For instance, the first dated example of the monogram in Gaul, even in its earlier form, is not till the year 377, and in its triumphant form P it is later still. The anchor and the fish are extremely rare, but they are found together in a monument in Marseilles, which bears also another token of great antiquity—viz, the usual termination of Pagan epitaphs, *lib. libertab. posterisque eorum*. Another epitaph in the same place, on which the anchor appears, concludes with one of the ancient Christian acclamations, *Refrigeret nos . . .* At Cimiez, in the department of the Maritime Alps, an epitaph of the year 474 has both the fish and the monogram. The ancient cemetery at Arles, adjoining the church in which, according to local tradition, St. Augustine was consecrated for his mission to England, has given several epitaphs beginning with one of the earliest acclamations, *Pax tecum*; and one of these also is ornamented with an anchor. Doves are met with very frequently, either with the olive branch, or sitting on the edge of a vase, or pecking at grapes, as on the Roman epitaphs; but this was a symbol which was continued even in Rome long after the use of other symbols had dropped, and is no sign

L.B., No. 551 &

No. 584 a.

No. 533.

therefore of great antiquity. Once we come across the acclamation *Vale*, not standing alone, however, as on Pagan tomb-stones, but accompanied by Christian phrases, thus—*PAX TECUM IN DEO HAVE VALE*. The formula seems to denote a period of transition from Pagan to Christian usage. Christianity had but recently come to the knowledge of the individual who wrote this epitaph, or perhaps it had but recently been introduced to the whole neighbourhood ; and this conjecture is confirmed by finding four or five other epitaphs in the same place, of the most simple and ancient form, the name only, followed by *Pax tecum*. *Vivat in Deo* is the prayer inscribed on the epitaph of a lady who died in the diocese of Rheims at the age of twenty-five, and the epitaph concludes with the familiar words from the fourth Psalm, *In pace dormiam et requiescam* ; *Vivatis in Deo* is on the epitaph of a double grave, and *Vive Deo* on another stone, found in 1847 in the Cathedral of Le Puy ; but it is doubtful whether this last was really an epitaph, and not rather an acclamation to a Bishop still living (*Scutari papa vive Deo*), like the same legend on a gold ring, found in the Saône, and lately in the possession of Cardinal de Bonald, *Vivas in Deo, Asboli*.

No. 495.

No. 336 c.

No. 576.

No. 572.

No. 29.

These are the epitaphs in M. Le Blant's collection which reproduce the symbols or acclamations which De Rossi has taught us to be notes of high antiquity, and we see that in Gaul as in Rome their use preceded that of the historical and more prosaic formulæ which make up the bulk of both collections. In both places it is curious to notice how the epitaphs of later date manifest the same tendency to multiply words without any corresponding increase of ideas or of interest. *Hic requiescit* was a formula introduced into Roman epigraphy towards the end of the fourth century. It first appears in Gaul on a stone of the year 422. In 469 we have it with the addition of *in pace* ; in 473 the complimentary epithet of *bonæ memoriæ* makes its appearance, and fifteen years later we get *Hic requiescit in pace bonæ memoriæ*. A few years later still

L.B., i. ix.

(A.D. 492) we find an additional prefix, or rather an amplification of the old form, *In hoc tumultu requiescit in pace bonæ memoriæ.*

Thus it would seem that in France as in Rome Christian epigraphy manifested a certain tendency to deteriorate from its original simplicity and religious devotional character as time went on. This is not a rash deduction from a limited number of specimens, but a legitimate conclusion drawn from a careful examination of all ascertainable premises. And though we may hope that slow patient industry may yet succeed in recovering many additional materials for the Christian archæologist, both from literary and subterranean researches, and that increased learning may prove equal to the solution of problems which at present baffle his skill, yet the materials already accumulated are so abundant, and the caution and ingenuity exercised upon their combination, comparison, and generalisation has been so great, that we believe there is very little chance of any serious modification of present conclusions being found necessary. We may recover more and more numerous epitaphs of the early Christians in various parts of the world, but we do not doubt that in all cases we shall find greater religious warmth and simplicity to be the characteristics of the most ancient, and that these features were marred and secularised in proportion to the greater extension of the Church, and the consequently greater influx of the ideas and language of the outer world.

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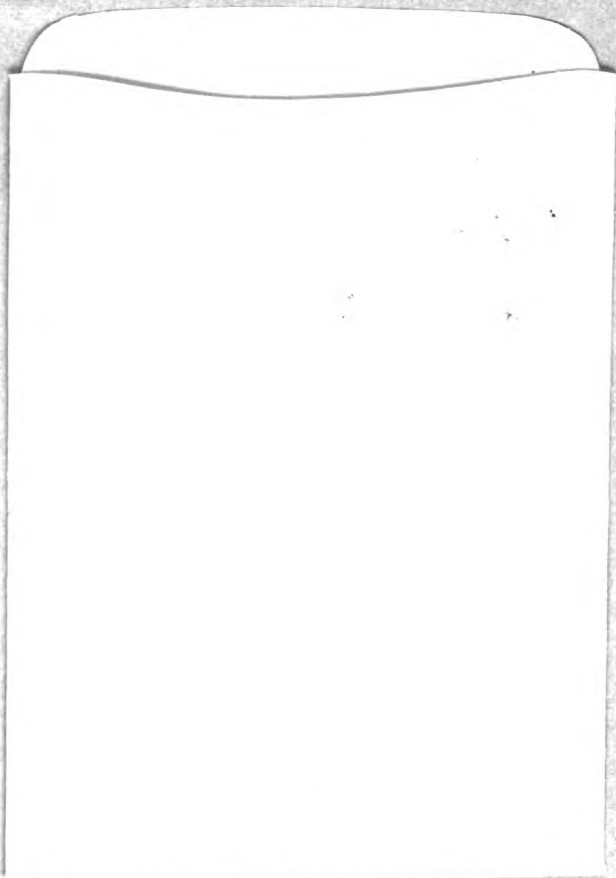
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